

Lebanese troops kill Syrian soldier

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese troops killed a Syrian soldier in Beirut and wounded another trying to force a civilian driver to give them a lift, security sources said Saturday. They said the troops opened fire on Friday night after the Syrians began shooting into the air to force the driver to stop and give them a lift near a roadblock in the suburb of Rasheed. Syrian troops, part of a 40,000-strong force in Lebanon, support the Lebanese army in its campaign since December to extend government control over all Beirut and end militia rule.

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Tanks deployed in Belgrade after unrest

BELGRADE (R) — Yugoslavia deployed army tanks in the capital Belgrade on Saturday after bloody clashes between riot police and anti-Communist protesters in which two people were reported killed. A Reuters reporter saw four tanks taking up position outside the Yugoslav parliament together with 12 armoured vehicles with machine-guns on the ready. Yugoslav media said a policeman and a protester had been killed and at least 76 people hurt in clashes after up to 70,000 people gathered to protest against Communist controls of media in the republic of Serbia. The violence followed months of ethnic tensions in Yugoslavia, a Balkan federation of six republics and many ethnic groups split by growing nationalism as it slowly turns towards democracy after 45 years of Communist rule.

Senate warns against Arab division, calls for building Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Upper House of Parliament Saturday urged Arab leaders to reject the presence of foreign occupation forces on Arab land in Iraq and the Gulf region, and warned that the continued presence of these troops constituted a flagrant aggression on Iraq and the whole Arab Nation.

The Upper House criticised the polarisation process in the Arab World and the creation of axes backed by foreign powers which are hostile to the Arab World. The emergence of new axes are bound to deepen the divisions among the Arabs and cause harm to their national interests said the statement.

The Senate emphasises the need for safeguarding Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and called on the Arab states to help Iraq reconstruct the devastated country and rebuild its intrinsic powers so that it can continue to offer service to the Arab causes and help the nation confront the looming dangers, the Upper House said in a statement issued after a closed session attended by Prime Minister Mudar Badran.

The prime minister submitted to the House a political report about the consequences of the U.S.-led war against Iraq and the current political moves in the area for the re-establishment of a

just and comprehensive peace, according to a statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

In its statement, the Senate said that the Gulf crisis was a natural outcome of negative factors that prevailed in the Arab region for a very long time, and problems that remained outstanding for many years.

These included the colonial partition of the Arab World, deprivation of the Arab people of their right to democratic rule and to unity, and the squandering of Arab funds in areas not contributing to the development of the Arab World, the statement said.

In addition, the crisis was an outcome of the Arab World's impotence in confronting the constant Israeli danger.

The Senate called on the Arab leaders to change this situation which, could create other crisis in the future. The Senate said that the Gulf war was unjust and was carried out by the United States exploiting disputes between two Arab countries. Washington launched the war to stunt the growth of Arab power and prevent Iraq from progress, the statement pointed out.

The Senate expressed deep distress at the consequences of this war which was designed to achieve Israel's interests and those of the western powers by devastating Iraq's economic and military in-

franchise, killing innocent civilians and adding to the burdens of the Arab World.

The Senate bitterly criticised Washington's drive to introduce what is termed as the new world order which, the Senate said, is in fact meant to perpetuate foreign influence in the Arab World and continued hegemony over Arab wealth. The House called on Arabs to work out a plan on their own to confront the American project and to safeguard the Arab order.

The House said that the Palestinian question remains the most important issue for Arabs and Muslims and the crux of the whole dispute in the region and the root cause for problems plaguing its countries simply because of the continued disregard of the Palestinian people's rights.

It said that the war on Iraq was aimed at providing protection to the Israeli enemy and perpetuating Israel's occupation of Arab land in Palestine. The statement urged Arab states to act in concert and demand the full implementation of international legitimacy in Palestine so that the Palestinian people can regain their land and their rights.

The statement landed the Jordanian stand since the start of the crisis and said that it was based on national principles that demanded Arab issues be settled within the Arab house.



HONOURING IRAQI WOMEN: Two young girls recite poetry in praise of the steadfastness of Iraqi women at a ceremony held Saturday at the Palace of Culture — see story on page 3 — (Photo by Youssef Al 'Alkan)

Qaddoumi in Amman; Hogg expected today

AMMAN (Agencies) — Foreign Minister Taha Al Masri Saturday met the head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) political department, Mr. Farouk Al Qaddoumi. Mr. Masri and Mr. Qaddoumi reviewed the latest developments in the region, Jordan's political efforts as well as the result of the visits to Amman by the European Community (EC) tria delegation and the Canadian Foreign Minister, Mr. Joe Clark.

Mr. Qaddoumi arrived in Amman earlier in the day coming from Baghdad. In London the foreign office said Saturday that British Foreign Office Minister Douglas Hogg will visit Jordan and Syria next week for post-Gulf war talks about Middle East security and the Arab-Israeli dispute.

A spokesman said Hogg would visit Jordan from Sunday to Tuesday and then go to Syria until Thursday.

Diplomatic sources said the

purpose of the Amman trip was to re-establish Britain's relationship with Jordan and seek its views about tackling the Palestinian problem following the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hogg visited Jordan as part of a regional tour on January 13, four days before the start of the Gulf war.

Hogg has said that, despite differences of opinion between London and Amman, Britain should maintain close contact with Jordan.

Hogg's visit to Syria will be the first by a British minister since diplomatic relations were resumed between the two countries in November after a break of more than four years.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Shara, whose country was a member of the U.S.-led Gulf alliance alongside Britain, met Hogg in London last month.

Baker gets Saudi pledge to work for Middle East peace

Combined agency dispatches

SAUDI Arabia has pledged to play an active role in pursuing peace in the Middle East and in setting up a permanent security force for the Gulf region, U.S. officials said.

The senior officials, travelling with Secretary of State James Baker made the announcement late Friday after Baker met for more than 2 hours with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. Baker then spent another two hours with Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud.

Senior U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, told reporters no decision on specific actions were taken on this first leg of Baker's 10-day trip.

But they said Baker received a "commitment" from the Saudis to pursue an Arab-Israeli settlement as well as economic reconstruction and a permanent security force for the war-ravaged region.

They made it clear they want to work closely with us," said one of the officials at a briefing. "They intend to work actively in all these areas. What we certainly heard tonight was a commitment to be active."

Egyptian Foreign Minister Esmat Abdul Maguid left Cairo Saturday for talks in Saudi Arabia between Baker and U.S.-Arab allies.

The foreign ministers of Egypt, (Continued on page 5)

40 journalists arrive in Amman

RUWEISHED (R) — Forty foreign journalists and two U.S. prisoners of war arrived in Jordan Saturday after being released by Iraq, an official said.

He said the POWs, travelling in a separate convoy, were handed over to American embassy officials at the Jordanian-Iraqi border, before flying to Bahrain via

Amman. The journalists, representing news organisations to Britain, France, Italy, Norway and the United States, were held by Iraq for five days. They also drove back for eight hours across the desert to Jordan's Ruweished

(Continued on page 5)

Iraqi opposition postpones Beirut conference While situation in South remains unclear, Iraq disbands 5 divisions

Combined agency dispatches

IRAQ on Saturday disbanded five more army divisions formed after its Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait, and demobilised reservists between the ages of 31 and 34, a military spokesman said.

In a statement on Radio Baghdad, the unidentified spokesman said the decision was made on the basis of a decree by the ruling Revolutionary Command Council dated March 6.

That decree had stipulated that new divisions formed after Aug. 2 be disbanded "because circumstances have now changed." It ordered the immediate dismantling of 10 divisions and the release from service of soldiers between the ages of 35 and 38.

An Iraqi division normally comprises 100,000 men. But the divisions formed to confront the U.S.-led allied onslaught were believed to be smaller.

The latest announcement, monitored in Nicosia, also said that all retired warrant officers, master sergeants and non-commissioned officers who had been recalled to duty have been released.

The dismantling of divisions coincided with reports of dissent in the ranks of the regular army amid increased reports of a growing rebellion in the south and north of Iraq.

Iraq's elite Republican Guard units have moved in force to rout opposition in several cities in southern and central Iraq. In Basra, the second-largest city where the rioting began last weekend, there were occasional reports of tank battles between the guardsmen and army

mutineers.

In Beirut, Iraqi opposition leaders meeting in Lebanon postponed the start of their conference from Sunday to Monday, organisers said.

Sheikh Abu Maytham Al Saghir told Reuters that delays in delegates reaching Beirut from London and Iran had forced the postponement of the three-day conference at the Bristol hotel.

Saghir is a member of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, a coalition of Shi'ite Muslim fundamentalist groups which is also represented in the Iraqi National Joint Action Committee.

The committee called the Beirut assembly of hundreds of Iraqi dissidents representing 17 groups, including Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims, Kurds, Socialists, Communists, a splinter group of Iraq's ruling Baath Party and former Iraqi army officers.

Scores of representatives gathered in Beirut on Saturday and began informal talks on providing a coordinated leadership for rebels reportedly fighting troops in Iraq.

In Damascus, Iranian Vice President Hassan Habibi met with Shi'ite and secular Iraqi opposition leaders Friday in an apparent demonstration of Iran's support for the opposition factions in their revolt against the Iraqi leadership.

An Iraqi opposition source said the meeting with both secular and religious opposition figures "proves that Iran has no intentions of establishing an Islamic republic in Iraq... that it respects the will and freedom of the Iraqi people to choose a successor for

Saddam."

The Iraqi opposition source, who requested anonymity, said the meeting was also attended by Syrian and Saudi officials.

The source said Habbibi, who was accompanied by Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, relayed his country's stand on the unrest in Iraq to the opposition leaders.

Velayati also reportedly met with Hussein Musawi and other members of Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Shi'ite militia, which is believed to be the umbrella group for the Muslim militants holding 12 western hostages in Lebanon.

A spokesman in Damascus for the Iran's official Islamic Republic news agency described the meeting as "just a routine visit."

Al Saghir accused Iraqi troops of using poison gas against rebels in at least two cities.

"As of yesterday (Friday), the chemical war on liberated Iraqi cities began," said Sheikh Al Saghir.

There was no independent confirmation of Saghir's accusation. "Karbala and Najaf were showered with poison gas. All kinds of gas are being used elsewhere," Saghir told reporters after talks with Lebanese Prime Minister Omar Karami in Beirut.

The U.S. State Department said on Friday the struggle in Iraq was very confused, with control of towns changing hands frequently between government forces and the rebels.

Fighting was concentrated on Friday in areas of southern Iraq, especially Najaf and Karbala, said U.S. spokesman Richard Boucher.

Amid growing tension at home, emir of Kuwait promises more democracy

TAIFA, Saudi Arabia (R) —

The emir of Kuwait, coming under U.S. pressure to bring political change to his liberated homeland, promised Saturday to introduce more democracy and said he would return home in a few days.

The emir, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, met U.S. Secretary of State James Baker at this Saudi mountain resort where he has spent most of his time in exile since fleeing Iraq's invasion of Kuwait last Jan. 2.

U.S. official said Baker — due to tour Kuwait later in the day — was raising the subject of free elections in the emirate following the Iraqi pullout.

Posing for photographers with Baker, the emir cited "private reasons" for not returning yet to Kuwait but said he would within the next week.

Following the war with Iraq, Kuwaiti citizens have called for increased participation in their country's political life so far dominated by the ruling Al Sabah family.

Asked if he would bring more democracy to his country, the emir told reporters: "Absolutely. We agreed on that."

He was apparently referring to a meeting with Kuwaiti opposition leaders last October in which they demanded that the country's constitution be revised and parliament, dissolved by him in 1966, be restored.

The emir said the constitution made no provision for given women the vote but he left it open as a possibility for the future.

U.S. officials said Baker, on a regional tour to explore Middle East peace opportunities, felt free to raise the subject during talks with the emir, and with his officials in Kuwait following the Washington-led coalition's war against Iraq.

"We'll talk about that general subject," a senior U.S. official told reporters before Baker met the emir. "Now we can, once that government gets back in, we think that it's legitimate to talk about it."

In the year before Iraq's inva-

sion, Kuwaiti activists campaigned for the restoration of parliament. It had been one of the most outspoken in the Arab World until it was dissolved at the height of the Iran-Iraq war.

Activist clamour has increased since Iraq's withdrawal and Washington is anxious to see political liberalisation as part of a "new world order" promised by U.S. President George Bush.

The emir promised in exile to respect the country's 1962 constitution, without referring directly to the dissolved parliament.

He is apparently unwilling to return to Kuwait until his safety and comfort can be guaranteed, a reluctance that rankles some Americans.

The emir told reporters he had sent "a long letter to my friend George Bush."

"We and the Kuwaiti people appreciate very much the role of the United States (in freeing Kuwait) and we see it as a friend," he said.

During Mr. Baker's flight to Taif from Riyadh, the new U.S. ambassador to Kuwait played down reports of tension between Kuwaitis and their government and that Palestinians in Kuwait were the target of attacks for supporting Iraq during the war.

The ambassador, Edward Gnehm, said he believed that the push for greater democracy in Kuwait was widespread and that the emir and his government were committed to moving in that direction.

He rejected suggestion that the emir had fallen into disavour. He was "well-liked and well-respected. People can't wait for him to come back," Mr. Gnehm added.

Baker was due to fly to Kuwait immediately after the Taif talks. Meanwhile, wives and children of some of the thousands of Kuwaitis taken to Iraq accused the government Saturday of misjudging the extent of the prisoners' plight.

Black-clad women mounted a vigil for the missing men said they knew of at least 22,000 held in Iraq compared with Prime Minis-

ter Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah's estimate of about 6,000.

"The government has only just come back here. They do not know what has been going on," said one angry young woman who told journalists that 13 members of her husband's family were missing.

About 200 relatives took part in the protest to demand that the authorities do more to find their menfolk and bring them home as soon as possible.

Iraq sent a batch of 1,200 Kuwaiti prisoners home Friday, but then told International Committee of the Red Cross officials supervising the operation that no more would be freed for at least a week.

The Baghdad government is bound to treat all Kuwaiti civilians it is holding as prisoners of war under a ceasefire agreement reached with U.S.-led coalition.

Iraqi troops scooped up thousands of Kuwaiti men and teenagers during the last days of the war and shipped them across the border to camps in Iraq. Many others were seized immediately after the invasion last Aug. 2.

The situation of the prisoners and the confusion over their number has become the focus of growing discontent with the government's efforts to restore a semblance of normal life in the Kuwaiti capital.

Kuwait City is still without electricity or water and no attempt has been made to remove the rubble of war.

Four European women who stayed in the emirate throughout the occupation shared the anger of Kuwaiti families over the official attitude to the missing men.

Diane Pike, a 39-year-old Englishwoman married to a Kuwaiti businessman, said no effort was made to provide the prisoners who returned Friday with proper transport, food or drink when they reached the border.

"No one seemed to care about those who were taken to Iraq," she said. "A lot of people are looking for their sons and daughters."

Israeli troops shoot, injure 55 Palestinians in Gaza

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (R) — Israeli troops wounded 55 Palestinians, including a five-year-old girl, Saturday in the worst violence here since the Gulf war began in mid-January.

The toll from clashes when troops fired on protesters in the occupied Gaza Strip was reported by Arab hospital officials and clinic staff of a U.N. relief agency.

Palestinians in the strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem marked 39 months of revolt against Israeli occupation with a general strike — three days before U.S. Secretary of State James Baker visits Israel on a post-war peace tour through the Middle East.

The clashes were the largest in the Palestinian uprising since before the war broke out on Jan. 17. Israel imposed a round-the-clock curfew on the 1.75 million Palestinian residents of the territories because of their pro-Iraqi sympathies.

The revolt regained momentum last October after Israeli police massacred 18 Arabs at Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

The army has eased restrictions in recent weeks, but maintains a night curfew and restricts travel.

Staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) said that in the worst of the clashes troops shot and wounded 45 Palestinians in Rafah in the strip.

Most of the wounded in Rafah

had slight to medium injuries, staff said, and many were soon released after treatment at UNRWA's Rafah Clinic. Some were transferred to Khan Younis's Nasser Hospital, officials there said.

The army said 20 Rafah residents were wounded slightly in clashes with troops. An Israeli officer and soldier were slightly wounded by stones and taken to hospital in Israel, the army said.

Witnesses in Rafah told Reuters the clashes between protesters and troops were pitched battles.

Some soldiers were overheard to remark that the protesters were "crazy" to go on protesting faced with army gunfire.

Yonhis also clashed with troops in Mughazi, Jabalya, and Nasserit refugee camps in the Strip, according to Arab hospital officials who said seven Palestinians were wounded in Mughazi, two in Jabalya — including the girl — and one in Nasserit.

The Israeli military confirmed there had been demonstrations in Mughazi and said a curfew was imposed there. They said they were checking on reports of wounded.

Al Fajr, an East Jerusalem Arabic daily, said the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) had given the green light for local Palestinian leaders to meet Mr. Baker.

Mr. Baker has said he would welcome a meeting with Palestinians but would not initiate it, because the United States did not

want to be seen as "annoying" certain Palestinian leaders.

Palestinian nationalist leader Faisal Al Hussein told Reuters there would be no meeting with Baker without a formal go-ahead from the PLO.

"The decision to boycott the Americans was taken inside the occupied territories. It won't be changed unless approved from Tunis, I mean the PLO," he said.

Asked about the report in Al Fajr, he said: "We do not deal with a green light. We need a decision, and it hasn't come yet."

Last May Palestinian leaders in the occupied Arab lands declared a boycott of U.S. officials in protest against Washington's blocking of a U.N. resolution calling for protection of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The local leaders are also hesitant to meet U.S. officials without a clear directive from the PLO in Tunis lest they be seen as an alternative to the PLO.

The problem of Palestinian representation has often snagged peace efforts. Israel adamantly refuses to negotiate with the PLO, which Palestinians consider their sole representative.

Washington broke off 18 months of talks with the PLO in June last year, following a Palestinian commando raid on an Israeli coastal area.

The PLO's relations with the United States have deteriorated further since then, because of the organisation's support for Iraq during the Gulf war.

Poos says Arabs split over Arafat role; PLO chairman says opposition would change

LUXEMBOURG (R) — Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jacques Poos said Saturday after a Middle East tour that the Arab World was split over Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's role in any regional peace talks because of his support for Iraq.

But in an interview released Saturday Mr. Arafat said that Arab states which fought Iraq in the Gulf war would still accept him as Palestinian leader despite backing of Baghdad.

"I am the conscience of the Arab Nation and represent its holiest cause," he said in an interview with the German maga-

zine Der Spiegel released ahead of publication on Monday.

Mr. Poos, one of three European Community (EC) foreign ministers to make the tour, told reporters eight Arab states — the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members and Syria and Egypt — do not consider Mr. Arafat a suitable interlocutor in talks to end the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Arafat's behaviour has opened a Gulf between him and the group of eight," Mr. Poos said. The GCC groups Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab

Emirates.

Mr. Arafat denied his pro-Iraq stance had set back chances for a Palestinian homeland.

"This war showed clearly how important the solution of the Palestinian problems has become now. The Gulf war advanced the solution of his problem," he said.

Asked how he could lobby the PLO if leading Arab states were hostile to him, Mr. Arafat said: "It would not be the first time. But that will take care of itself, I know my Arabs."

The EC has shunned contact

(Continued on page 5)

'Syria buying improved Scuds from North Korea'

TEL AVIV (AP) — Syria is buying improved Soviet-designed Scud missiles from North Korea and is capable of equipping them with chemical warheads, Israeli newspapers say.

Israel has learned that Syria and North Korea have signed a contract on the supply of Scuds, military officials were quoted as saying in several newspapers' weekend editions, published Friday.

The daily Hadashot said Syria made the deal with North Korea because the Soviet Union refused three years ago to provide Syria with the improved Scuds.

The military officials were not identified, and no further details on the deal were given. The military command had no comment when asked about the interviews.

The prospect is worrisome for Israel, which during the Gulf war came under 18 Scud surface-to-surface missile attacks from Iraq — and still regards Syria as its perhaps most fearsome enemy in the Middle East.

A total of 39 missiles were fired at Israel from Iraq, killing two people, wounding 230 and damaging or destroying nearly 11,000 apartments.

All the missiles fired by Iraq carried conventional warheads. Iraqi capability to use chemical warheads thus remained unclear. But Syria has successfully completed the development of chemical warheads, Israeli officials

were quoted as saying.

According to Israeli army sources, Syria has been equipping itself with tabun and sarin, highly toxic types of nerve gases, since receiving chemical weapons from Egypt in the 1970s and then launching its own production programme.

In addition, the missiles ordered by Syria from North Korea are more accurate and deadly than the version used by Iraq, the reports said.

The original Soviet SS-1 Scud B medium-range missile has a decreased payload of 180 kilograms, which allowed Iraq to increase its range to 600 to 700 kilometres.

The North Korean variety, according to Israeli army officials has an improved engine and a range of 500 kilometres. However, it retains an original warhead of some 750 kilograms. The daily Maariv said these missiles are fired from mobile launchers.

Syria wanted to purchase the increased-range Scuds for two reasons: It might fire missiles at central areas of Israel from distant areas in Syria, making the launchers less vulnerable for a counterattack, and can also focus on targets in southern Israel.

The Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies says in its 1989-1990 Middle East military balance publication that Syria has 18 regular Scud B launchers, in addition to the Soviet-

made short-range Frog-7 missiles and SS-21s, or Scarabs.

The centre says Syria has "stockpiles of nerve gas, including sarin warheads for surface-to-surface missiles."

Despite Israel's missile anxieties, the military officials noted a change in the Syrian statements regarding the Middle East conflict, attributing this to Damascus' desire to improve relations with Western countries.

One official told Maariv that "the Syrians are ready today to put techniques for a dialogue to a test, although they are still not abandoning their principles."

Syria is seeking a return of the annexed Golan Heights, captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war, and demands that the Jewish state relinquish other areas captured in that war — the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem — to Palestinian control.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who opposes giving up occupied lands, has repeatedly called on Syria to enter into peace talks with Israel.

Arafat says Bush plan conforms to PLO ideas

PARIS (AP) — Yasser Arafat said Saturday that U.S. President George Bush's post-Gulf war outline for peace between Arabs and Israelis conforms to ideas advanced by the PLO.

In an interview from Tunis with the French television network Antenne-2, Arafat called Bush's speech to the American people on Wednesday "very important."

"The path of a solution of Middle East problems passes through a resolution of the Israeli-Arab problem and the Israeli-Palestinian problem," Arafat said.

"The most important thing is to put these ideas into practice," he said. "These ideas conform to the Palestinian peace initiative of 1988, peace against the territories."

Arafat was referring to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, occupied by Israel since the 1967 Middle East war. The Palestine Liberation Organisation hopes to establish a state in the territories. "For the moment, the big question is to know whether there is a

double language on the part of the international community: One for Palestine and the other for Kuwait," Arafat said.

"The problems of the Middle East must see the participation of all the concerned parties, including the Israeli government and the PLO, under the direction of the United Nations," he said.

The PLO in December 1988 renounced terrorism as a method to gain an independent Palestinian state, and offered to renounce its armed struggle against Israel in exchange for the territories.

Frustration with Israel's refusal to accept the proposition helped spur Arafat to back Iraq in the Gulf war. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein suggested he would abandon Kuwait, which his troops invaded Aug. 2, if Israel relinquished the territories.

Arafat's support for Iraq displeased Arab members of the coalition and weakened the PLO's international standing. Iraq's defeat by the U.S.-led alliance leaves Arafat without the

backing of a major Arab country. Bush, trying to attach the momentum of his fighting war victory to the long-stalled peace process, has called for Israel to give up the territories in return for recognition of its borders through negotiation with Arabs.

The U.S. president said Israel's security must be provided for, as must legitimate Palestinian political rights.

U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker has publicly offered to meet with Palestinian leaders in the occupied territories during his visit to Israel during a Mideast tour this week.

The PLO's executive committee in Tunis, Tunisia debated Friday and Saturday whether and how Palestinian leaders in the territories should meet Baker. No official decision had been reported.

Sources close to the talks said they were held under Arafat's aegis and included two of the more radical Palestinian leaders, Georges Hachash and Nayef Hawatmeh.

Liberation highlights tensions in Kuwait

By John Pomfret
The Associated Press

KUWAIT CITY — The liberation of Kuwait is bringing simmering tensions in this complex society to a boil — between Kuwaitis and the foreigners who made this country work and between Muslim conservatives and western-leaning businessmen who want change.

Now a new division is troubling this oil-rich emirate — between those who suffered the seven-month occupation and those who left.

On a patch of desert in a no man's land between Iraq and Kuwait, hundreds of Egyptians, Jordanians and stateless residents of Kuwait are camping out.

Kidnapped by Iraqi forces retreating into Iraq, they have been refused permission to return.

"I was born and live in Kuwait," said Mounther Munir, a 27-year-old Jordanian living in a tent with nine other men in the no man's land. "It's a second country for me."

Kuwaitis say Iraq's invasion of their nation taught them a lesson: they must become more self-reliant.

Before Aug. 2, Kuwait's population of 1.2 million was 60 per cent foreign.

Some 350,000 Palestinians did the technical work, managing businesses and working as engineers, computer scientists, nurses and doctors. Filipinos cleaned and served, staffing hospitals, hotels and working as maids. Pakistanis ran pharmacies. Indians sold clothes.

Many Kuwaitis did very little. They held paper-pushing jobs in ministries or lived off exorbitant rental fees that foreigners were charged for a chance to do business here.

"We lived a lazy life," said Ahmad A. Al Yaqout, a pilot with Kuwaiti Airways whose family makes most of its money in real estate. "I drove fast cars and played with fast women. It was a good life."

During the occupation, many Kuwaitis say Palestinians and others cooperated with the Iraqis, denouncing resistance activists and providing transportation and other aid to Iraqi troops.

Although government officials and resistance fighters say the number of actual collaborators was small, the average Kuwaiti appears to feel that foreigners did not suffer as much as they did during the difficult seven months.

"Clear them out of here," said Mohammed Ibrahim Hussein, a 45-year-old supervisor at the Kuwait Petroleum Co. "They only wanted to get rich here. They have no loyalty to our country."

Already, hospitals report that scores of Palestinian youths have been attacked by army and resistance personnel. "What we are giving them is

nothing compared to what we got from the Iraqis," said Aziz Ghuloum, a resistance fighter controlling a Kuwait city police station. "It feels good to bloody these bastards."

Kuwaitis say the occupation has also opened a rift between conservative Islamism and westernism.

For Safar Jafar, a 30-year-old businessman known for her burgundy Jaguar, the occupation taught her self-confidence and that democracy was necessary for Kuwait.

Spitting weapons through Iraqi checkpoints and acting as a look-out for resistance bombers, Ms. Jafar says "I realised that to be a Kuwaiti meant we must be a free people."

The ruling Al Sabah family, which has dominated Kuwait since 1759, must share power with the people, women should be allowed the vote and parliament must be given more power, Ms. Jafar said.

Ms. Jafar and other say they are amazed that the country's ruler, Sheikh Jaber Al Sabah, has yet to return. He remains in Taif, Saudi Arabia, where the government had established exile headquarters, awaiting the return of order to Kuwait.

In the middle class Sulaybiyah neighbourhood, however, where pick-ups and Fordson outboard Ben's and BMWs, men and women say Kuwait has no need for more freedom.

"We were already a free society," said Abdul Karim Sagor Al Ali, a manager of a trading house. "We want Kuwait to be just like it was before the invasion. No changes. We had a good life."

Around his spare living room, numerous bearded men nodded in agreement.

"Women should stay in the home and the emir should be the emir," said his friend, Rayed Abdullah 68.

Layered on top of these simmering tensions is a new division — between those that suffered through seven months of Iraqi occupation and those who either fled or were abroad at the time of the invasion.

Kuwaitis who stayed behind often refer to themselves as "real Ms. Jafar," speaking from a plush sitting room in her father's imposing three story house. "It doesn't mean hanging around discos in London and Cairo or talking democracy in coffee shops abroad."

Many of those who stayed behind say they will not easily give up the powers and responsibilities they assumed once many of their bosses fled the country.

"This is the newest tension in our society," said a recently returned government official. Files in his office were taken home by an assistant who stayed during the occupation.

"To this day, I haven't gotten them back," he said.

U.S. allies may get top weapons, despite arms-race fear

By Ashraf Fouad
Reuters

CAIRO — Gulf Arab states are expected to ask the West, mainly the United States, for precision weapons and advanced warplanes traditionally denied to most Arab countries, according to arms industry sources.

"They have a better than an even chance. I see much less hostility in the U.S. Congress now," says a Europe-based military expert.

Any appreciable flow of top-of-the-range weapons would worry those who fear another regional arms race.

The area's military balance of power changed in the six-week Gulf war. U.S. military technology crushed Iraq's formidable war machine, created by both Western and Soviet arms sales.

Congress has in the past blocked White House requests to sell advanced arms, like the shoulder-held Stinger anti-aircraft missile and the F-15E plane, to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.

It feared they might end up in Palestinian hands or be used against Washington's chief regional ally, Israel.

But experts say the close cooperation and integration among armies of the Gulf states and western powers in the Gulf war could change this view.

Experts believe the Gulf Arabs are particularly interested in F-15E equipped with additional fuel tanks to give them a longer range, air-to-ground laser-directed bombs and precision guided weapons like those used against Iraq.

"That will put Congress in a difficult situation because these weapons are only used by the U.S. Air Force and the RAF (Britain's Royal Air Force)," says an expert familiar with the military needs of regional states.

Germany, for one, has already announced the sale of 10 of its Fuchs (Fox) chemical sniffer tanks to Saudi Arabia.

The White House has notified Congress it will sell Egypt 46 F-16 jet fighters and over 1,600 bombs and missiles worth \$1.6 billion.

Egypt, which has 35,000 troops in the U.S.-led multinational force which retook Kuwait from Iraq last week, already has about 100 of the advanced F-16s.

Egypt, Washington's strongest Arab ally, Syria and the six Gulf Arab states have formed a peacekeeping force to patrol the region after the eventual pullout of Western troops.

"If (U.S. President George) Bush is a salesman, he will not let anybody buy anything but American," one expert said.

Experts said availability of the weapons and financing the purchases were not serious problems even though the Gulf states had spent billions of dollars on the war.

One U.S.-based Arab expert suggested that the United States in withdrawing troops could leave behind some weapons to help the Gulf Arabs boost their defences.

"They have a tremendous borrowing power to fit the bill," another expert said.

In the past, Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, turned to Britain for Tornado warplanes and China for medium range CSS-2 missiles in deals worth more than \$20 billion after Congress turned it down.

Kuwait signed a \$1.9 billion deal with Washington for 40 F/A-18 fighter bombers equipped with Maverick missiles before Iraq seized the emirate on August 2.

And experts say Kuwait is expected to ask the United States to double the order to help rebuild its military power.

"They might ask for F-16s on top of an additional 20 to 40 F/A-18s," the expert said.

There is also a very good prospect for helicopters in the Gulf especially the (anti-tank) Apache which performed in the Gulf war much better than many experts predicted," he added.

Experts said the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait were eager to acquire the Apache or the Super Cobra in addition to other helicopter gunships and transport helicopters from the United States.

Ethiopia rebels claim capturing major town

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Anti-government rebels on Saturday claimed they have captured a second major town in northwestern Ethiopia in as many weeks of fighting.

The Tigre People's Liberation Front said in a broadcast that its guerrillas had destroyed government forces in Gondar, a regional capital about 500 kilometres from Addis Ababa.

The broadcast, monitored in Nairobi, did not say when Gondar was captured or give casualty figures on either side.

It said Gondar and the surrounding areas were "completely free" of government control.

The claims could not be verified independently.

The announcement came nearly two weeks after the insurgents claimed to have captured Debre Marcos, the capital of Gojjam region, 205 kilometres from the capital.

Gojjam is south of Gondar and is one of Ethiopia's two main grain-producing regions.

On March 1, the insurgents claimed to have wiped out two army brigades in the fight for Debre Marcos and to have "killed, wounded and captured more than 1,300 enemy soldiers," according to a rebel broadcast.

The government said Feb. 27 that its troops in Gondar and Gojjam were engaged in "fierce battles to repulse a coordinated offensive by Tigrean and Eritrean rebels."

The national military campaign centre said in a statement that the insurgents suffered heavy losses in their attempt to isolate the northwestern provinces of Gojjam and Gondar.

Saturday's claim came less than 24 hours after another rebel broadcast claimed victories about 240 kilometres north of the capital, north of the capital, Addis Ababa.

On Friday, the Tigreans claimed to have killed 2,200 government soldiers in fighting about 240 kilometres north of Addis Ababa.

A second rebel broadcast Saturday claimed the government lost 2,000 soldiers attempting to recapture Debre Marcos.

The government says the insurgents are trying to sever the capital's links with northern Ethiopia by seizing the nation's three main northern highways.

One of the highways connects the capital with the Red Sea port of Assab which handles 70 per cent of Ethiopia's imports and exports and is home to the country's sole oil refinery.

The road is also crucial to deliveries of emergency food to Tigre, where an estimated 1.2 million people are suffering from drought-related hardships.

The recent fighting breaks a nearly yearlong lull in the Tigreans' 16-year effort to overthrow President Mengistu Haile Mariam and install a hardline Communist rule.

In late 1989 and early 1990, the Tigreans won control of their home province, Tigre. They then expanded the war to other provinces.

The Eritrean People's Liberation Front is a separate and much larger insurgency that for 30 years has been seeking independence for Eritrea, Ethiopia's north-easternmost province.

Although their goals differ, the Eritreans and the Tigreans have in the past coordinated their offensives against government troops.

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Rights group urges U.S. troops to protect Palestinians in Kuwait

WASHINGTON (AP) — An international human rights group said Friday that U.S. troops should protect Palestinians in Kuwait who are being accused by Kuwaiti residents of collaborating with Iraq.

"As of yesterday, some 6,000 Palestinians were reportedly being held without charges on the authority of a military force acting in conjunction with U.S. special forces," said Andrew Whitely, executive director of Middle East Watch.

"Many were severely treated before being detained," Whitely said in a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar. "Dozens of others have been

hospitalised, or killed."

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said he had no evidence that large numbers of Palestinians had been detained.

"We do not have information on beatings, killings and things like that have sometimes been reported," Boucher said.

Whitely also said the U.N. Security Council should pass a resolution warning Iraqi President Saddam Hussein against violating human rights in putting down dissent within his country.

"The cessation of hostilities between the allied forces and Iraq does not mean that the Security Council's responsibilities have ended," Whitely said.

Kuwait opposition group postpones planned democracy conference

LONDON (AP) — Organisers of a planned conference of Kuwait opposition groups said Friday they have postponed the meeting in order to allow politicians from Kuwait to attend.

Ali Albedah, spokesman for the conference on democracy in Kuwait, said the conference, which was supposed to take place March 15, was organised before the coalition forces drove out occupying Iraqi troops.

"We didn't think it would be possible for anyone inside to attend. But now everything's different," Albedah, a Bahrain-based Kuwaiti management consultant, told a news conference at

a London hotel.

The planned conference is part of stepped-up pressure on Kuwait's ruling Al Sabah family, now returning home to a ravaged country, to re-establish parliament and hold free elections.

Kuwait was the only Arab state in the Gulf to experiment with democracy, but the Al Sabahs dissolved parliament in 1986 after it became too critical.

Albedah said he hoped to hold the conference in Kuwait in about a month's time. "But I don't think they will allow it," he said.

He said the meeting will be held in London if the Kuwaiti authorities ban it.

Iraqi opposition meeting to coordinate positions

By Nadim Ladki
Reuters

BEIRUT — Some 250 Iraqi dissidents representing 17 groups united only by their hatred of President Saddam Hussein met on Sunday to try to give their country's rebels what they seem to lack most: coordinated leadership.

The three-day Beirut conference, the largest in the history of the Iraqi opposition, was called by the Iraqi National Joint Action Committee (INJAC).

The coalition's factions include Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims, Kurds, Socialists, Communists, a splinter group of Iraq's ruling Baath Party and former Iraqi army officers.

The groups are backed by old enemies of Saddam — Iran or Syria or both.

Fighting between rebels and Iraqi government forces has been reported in cities and towns in the mainly Shi'ite south, and Kurdish areas in the north, since last week's end of the Gulf war.

A spokesman for the Tehran-based Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) claimed Friday that up to 30,000 people had been killed and tens of thousands wounded in the revolt which started in Basra, Iraq's second city.

U.S. officials say it spread to more than 20 cities and towns, but with foreign reporters banned from areas of unrest, situation reports on Saturday were sketchy.

Damascus-based spokesmen for two of the rebel groups repeated earlier claim that their fighters had seized control of the northern city of Sulaimaniya.

In Beirut, INJAC leaders say, they will discuss everything from a reported offer by President Saddam to share power to formation of an interim substitute government.

"The real problem for the uprising is it has no leadership," a leader of a pro-Iranian group told Reuters.

A western diplomat said: "The western allies (in the Gulf war) hope the army will take out Saddam as we are opposed to any breakup of Iraq and the opposition groups are simply too divided to be effective."

The largest groups in the INJAC coalition are SCIRI and the Islamic Dawa Party, both Shi'ite,

Jalal Talbani's National Kurdish Union and the Democratic Kurdish Party led by Masoud Barazani.

The pro-Iranian leader, who declined to be identified, said only the Kurdish groups and Dawa had real influence inside Iraq. But even they were unable to lead the rebellion alone.

INJAC, formed last December in Damascus, "pleases Syria and does not upset Iraq. It gives a popular title to the uprising and a face for any future ruling formula," the leader said.

"But what it needs is a leadership that can accumulate the broad aspirations of the Iraqi people and lead the rebellion."

SCIRI, headed by Ayatollah Mohammed Bakr Al Hakim, claims to be playing a major role

in southern Iraq, but even it concedes that it does not lead the uprising.

"People inside the liberated cities are choosing their local leaders and appointing their officials. Those leaders are distinguished individuals who might or might not have a political background," said Sheikh Abu Maitham Al Saghir, a SCIRI member.

Opposition sources say the local leaders have too many problems in securing the cities and towns they have captured to be able to plan overall military or political action.

The pro-Iranian leader rejected western concerns that the rebellion was aimed at setting up an Iranian-style Islamic state.

"The revolt is a popular one. Islamic elements move in it but that does not make it an Islamic

revolution," he said.

He said Iran, which fought Iraq for eight years from 1980 to 1988 and provides bases for many of the anti-Saddam groups, was not playing an active role in the revolt since direct intervention would backfire.

"Iran wants to help the Iraqi people without harming their interests or itself," he said.

"Tehran's intervention would hurt the revolt and give Turkey an excuse to intervene in Kurdish territory in northern Iraq."

"That is why even the most militant of the (Shi'ite) groups, are not calling this an Islamic revolution, but a popular uprising. They want to gather the widest possible support for it and have the highest number of opposition leaders backing it."

PRAYER TIMES

04:33	Fajr	Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
05:20	(Sunrise) Dhuhr	Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
11:46	Dhuhr	Armenian International Church Tel. 683226
15:47	'Asr	Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 611255
17:42	Maghreb	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 654932
18:29	'Isha	

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedish Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 652785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624990

Church of the Assumption Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Teresian Church Tel. 622666

Church of the Assumption Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 625543

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be relatively cold and partly cloudy and there will be a chance for occasional showers of rain. Winds will be northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and sea calm.

Min/Max. temp.	5 / 15
Aqaba	11 / 25
Deserts	3 / 19

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AMMAN:

Dr. Mohammad Khalil	896204
Dr. Akram Serhan	894611
Dr. Zein Al Zoghdol	638391
Dr. Sami Khouri	681973
Firas pharmacy	661912

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Al Asena pharmacy..... 637055

Nairookh pharmacy..... 623672

Al Salam pharmacy..... 636730

Yacoub pharmacy..... 644945

Shamsi pharmacy..... 637660

IBRD:

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Al Shams' pharmacy..... 775262

ZARQA:

Dr. Youssef Fadil..... (—)

Khalifeh pharmacy..... 985417

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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel.	815817, 654932

Jordan Valley..... 13 / 22

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 19, Aqaba 23. Humidity readings: Amman 85 per cent, Aqaba 25 per cent.

Fordons pharmacy..... 778336

Al Asena pharmacy..... 637055

Nairookh pharmacy..... 623672

Al Salam pharmacy..... 636730

Yacoub pharmacy..... 644945

Shamsi pharmacy..... 637660

IBRD:

Dr. Radwan Al Saad..... (—)

Al Shams' pharmacy..... 775262

ZARQA:

Dr. Youssef Fadil..... (—)

Khalifeh pharmacy..... 985417

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre.....	81381/332
Khalid Maternity, J. Amman.....	642814/2
Al-Khadi Maternity, J. Amman.....	642441/2
Isabel Amman Maternity.....	642362

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Mohammad Khalil	896204
Dr. Akram Serhan	894611
Dr. Zein Al Zoghdol	638391
Dr. Sami Khouri	681973
Firas pharmacy	661912

Min/Max. temp. 5 / 15
Aqaba 11 / 25
Deserts 3 / 19

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre..... 637111

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Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Saturday tours social services centres in Al Mafraq Governorate (Petra photo)

Princess Basma stresses need for public role in social services centres

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma, chairperson of the Queen Alia Social Welfare Fund (QAF) Board of Trustees, Saturday affirmed the importance of public participation in supporting social services centres, enhancing the basic role played by the official and voluntary institutions and helping those institutions achieve their goals of contributing to the development of the local society.

At a meeting with official and public leaders of Khalidiya and Rahab towns in Mafraq Governorate, Princess Basma underscored the role of the social services centres in organising and guiding the capabilities of the people in order to develop the society.

Princess Basma commended the citizens' cooperation and interaction with the centres' programmes and activities.

Her Royal Highness, touring QAF centres in Mafraq, inspected the health educational programme carried out by the Nursing Faculty at the University of Jordan in cooperation with QAF at the fund's centres in Mafraq, Khalidiya, and Rahab as well as Rahab Girls Secondary School.

The programme aims at increasing the number of beneficiaries from the health educational programmes and at establishing cooperation between citizens and the concerned au-

thorities, besides giving the chance to students at the Nursing Faculty to have practical experience.

The programme includes an assessment of the health and nutritional situation in Mafraq Governorate, conducting medical tests for children and women and delivering educational lectures.

Women benefiting from the programme stressed the importance of the information they received in the field of children's health.

Princess Basma's tour included inspection of Khalidiya and Rahab social services centres which were built by QAF recently. QAF has already built 30 centres around the Kingdom.

Labour law enforced to employ Jordanians

By Mamdouh Al Hawamdeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordanian government did not introduce any new measures concerning the non-Jordanian workers in the Kingdom, but it is enforcing the labour law and regulations concerning the employment of non-Jordanians, according to Labour Minister Abdul Karim Al Dughmi.

"What the Ministry is doing now is related to plans for reorganising the Jordanian labour market, in accordance with directives by the government, with the aim of reducing unemployment among Jordanians; the ministry is offering jobs to non-Jordanians where no Jordanian substitutes are available," the minister said in a statement to the Jordan Times and Al Rai dailies.

The minister said that the Ministry of Labour would not be lenient towards workers or employers violating the labour law, and will not hesitate in ordering non-Jordanian workers to leave the country, should they be found working in areas other than those for which they have been brought into the country irrespective of the nature of their work.

"The Jordanian authorities have ordered 609 non-Jordanians to leave the country since the beginning of 1991 in implementation of directives by the Labour Ministry's Employment Committee's recommendations," the minister said. He said that the workers were found to be em-

ployed without any work permits.

The labour minister's statement followed a meeting of the Central Employment Committee during which a general review of the labour market, the situation of non-Jordanian workers, the renewal of their permits and work of various employment offices in the provinces was made.

The minister discussed with the committee the question of intensifying inspection campaigns at various businesses and companies, and discussed several ideas related to the work of inspection teams.

In an obvious determined move on the part of the Ministry of Labour to implement government directives concerning the employment of non-Jordanians in the Kingdom, last week it rejected applications by local organisations for the employment of 51 non-Jordanians but approved nine others. Those rejected were either non-Jordanians whose work permits had expired or people employed in places for which Jordanian substitutes are now available, a ministry official said.

At Saturday's meeting the committee rejected 36 applications of non-Jordanians and deferred consideration of other applications until sufficient studies of their cases were completed.

Prime Minister Mudar Badran last month instructed the Ministry of Labour to undertake all possible measures to find work for the Jordanian job-seekers who can take the place of non-Jordanians in any field.

Ceremony held to honour Iraqi women

AMMAN (J.T.) — A ceremony to honour Iraqi women was held at the Palace of Culture of Al Hussein Youth City Saturday under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor.

The ceremony, organised as part of Jordan's observance of the International Women's Day, was organised by the Ministry of Social Development and attended by the Iraqi ambassador and his wife, and an audience of invited guests, mostly women.

Addressing the audience, Minister of Social Development Youssef Al Azem paid tribute to the Iraqi women for their efforts in service of their nation during the Gulf war.

"The Arab World can only survive with the active contribution of good and brave women who can work side by side with men not only to repel aggression, but in the field of reconstruction and development," the minister

said. Pharmacist Laila Maani, a woman who was recruited in the People's Army in Jordan, addressed the ceremony lauding the endeavours of the Iraqi women in times of war and peace.

Another speaker was a delegate from the Iraqi Women Federation who thanked Jordan for its part in supporting Iraqi families during the war.

Dr. Samira Faiyad, who represented the General Federation of Jordanian Women, talked about the assistance offered by Jordanian women to their sisters in Iraq.

The Queen later presented the wife of the Iraqi ambassador with a Jordanian women's shield in recognition of the Iraqi women's steadfastness under the siege and during the war.

Queen Noor Wednesday, on the eve of the International Women's Day, made a statement

referring to the situation in the Arab World following seven months of confrontation, environmental degradation, warfare, destruction and human sufferings.

The Queen also referred to the Jordanian women's efforts to help their Iraqi sisters by supplying medicine and food at a crucial moment in Iraq's history.

The Queen called on Jordanian women to join hands with other world women to achieve a better future where peace and justice prevail. She said that "to make this new age of reality, we must rid ourselves of the constraints and the painful memories of the past, and respond to the opportunity to realise the promise of a better and more honourable future for our children."

She also voiced her confidence that Jordanian women will rise to the challenge as they did from the very first days of the Gulf crisis.



Her Majesty Queen Noor Saturday attends a ceremony held at the Palace of Culture in observance of the International Women's Day (Petra photo)

Jordanians sceptic about U.S. call for peace in region

By Nur Sati
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Public reaction to U.S. President George Bush's call for Middle East peace, Wednesday, was displayed here with much caution.

Though at the beginning of Mr. Bush's speech some people were surprised, it later dawned on the masses that after every Middle East crisis of war, in the past, U.S. presidents used to emit similar calls "concerning the region without any concrete results."

"In fact," Dr. Huda Fakhour, a dentist, recalled: "Each time these peace calls were issued, the Middle East became worse than it was before such attempts." After 1967, 1970, 1980 and 1982 was the Americans came out with such proposals, but with no results," Mrs. Fakhour told the Jordan Times. "Soon it will be forgotten again," she added.

Mrs. Toujan Faisal, a leading woman activist, took Mr. Bush's speech with scepticism. "I do not take the United States seriously. This call for peace is just to silence the Arab street because America feels threatened by the Arab masses."

Amongst many Jordanians and Palestinians the U.S. is looked at as a colony of Israel. "America cannot take its own decision without consulting Israel and the proof is that until today, the United States has been moving according to Israel's wishes," Mrs. Faisal contended.

President Bush's speech to Congress, Wednesday, called for a settlement of the Arab-Israeli

conflict on the basis of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. The two resolutions call for an Israeli withdrawal from Arab territory in return for peace. Both Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) accepted the resolutions. Israel rejected them.

The masses in the street have kept a tiny hope in their hearts that, maybe, this time, things are finally different "because the entire world community has realised that there will never be peace without solving the Palestinian issue," Samir, a supermarket owner said.

A conversation between the buyers at the supermarket and Samir concluded that the United States "is just buying time. They (U.S.) do not really have the power to enforce the plan." In any case, Samir added, "what is the use of the plan if Israel will not sit (for talks) with the PLO."

A Jordanian who preferred anonymity said: "Perhaps PLO leader Yasser Arafat may not be the best person to sit and negotiate peace, but many Palestinians, including Faisal Hussein (Palestinian activist), are saying that the PLO is a symbol of the Palestinians."

"Bush's speech did not mention the PLO either, but many Arabs and a majority of the international community see the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," according to Huda, a university student.

Many Jordanian citizens see the fact that the U.S. and Israel

do not really acknowledge the PLO as a negotiator at the Middle East peace table as a major setback on the road for peace. "I do not believe the peace call is genuine. Let us say it was, however, I still do not see any outcome for the simple reason that the U.S. has been saying that they want a Palestinian 'moderate' to solve the issue," Hana Darwazah told the Jordan Times.

Darwazah's reaction to Bush's statement was that the U.S. had no choice. "I am not surprised that Bush made that statement. The U.S. had to call for peace. I do not think the (U.S.) administration likes the idea very much though," Darwazah believes that the Arab allies of the U.S. are also exerting pressure on the U.S. to save face "after this horrible action of theirs."

The U.S. is definitely not trying as hard as they did with Kuwait, were some of the comments amongst Jordanians at a bus stop. "I guess it is yet too early to tell but we have heard these words over and over again," Wasfi, a Ministry of Education employee exclaimed as he was getting on the bus.

With a knowing expression and a nod of agreement with Wasfi's remark, Aida, a university student, added: "Partly, we all stopped believing America. On the other hand I would like to keep a ray of hope."

Aida's friend interjected: "One can never really tell. What we, as citizens, hear is very different from what actually happens under the table or in secret meetings."

IOM reports fewer refugees from Iraq, Kuwait

AMMAN (J.T.) — The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said in a press release Saturday that it had arranged the repatriation of 3,889 foreign residents of Iraq and Kuwait in need of international assistance between Feb. 28 and March 6 1991.

The repatriates included Egyptians, Sudanese, Vietnamese, Bangladeshis, Yemenis and other nationalities, the release said. It said that since the cessation of hostilities in the Gulf, the flow of third world country nationals seeking repatriation had shown a considerable decrease but there is not enough data on the number of persons believed still in Iraq and Kuwait or on the percentage, among them, of those who might wish to return to their home countries.

As regards the flow of refugees, no clear trends have yet

emerged, but IOM will continue to meet its commitment under the regional humanitarian plan of action to handle transportation of people, including inland transport.

The release said that IOM would consequently maintain its field structure, albeit at appropriately adapted staff strength, and would monitor potential needs and operational requirements both from headquarters and in the field.

All in all IOM has assisted a total of 28,463 people to return to their countries of origin since the outbreak of the crisis, the release added.

IOM, which has its offices at Amra Hotel in Amman, said that by March 6 it had confirmed pledges of financial funds to cover its operation in the region totalling \$16.7 million, of which \$9.3 million had been received.

Conference reviews Amman municipality's performance

MAFRAQ (J.T.) — Greater Amman Municipality Saturday opened its first ever conference to review its operations and future plans for the various districts of Amman and the participants are expected to issue recommendations for improving municipal services in the light of their study of six working papers.

Addressing the opening session Mayor Ali Subeimat said that the capital, like all other cities, continues to face growing challenges all the time, but that it should be underlined that no success or improvement can be expected without the serious efforts of the municipality's human resources.

"This conference, which is organised for the first time, is aimed at reviewing the municipality's achievements and the positive and negative aspects of its function in the past year so that mistakes and undesirable practices can be avoided in the next stage," the mayor told the meeting.

Mr. Subeimat expressed hope that the participants, who represent various departments, would benefit from the discussions and try to offer better services to the public.

"I appeal to the participants to focus attention on the constructive aspects of the municipality's work and to try to exercise self-criticism with a view to introducing improvements," said the mayor.

The opening session was also addressed by Mohammad Hamdan, director of the Information and Public Relations Department, who said that the conference was a stocktaking or self-assessment of all achievements and aspirations, now that the municipality has gone a long way in meeting the needs of the Ammanians people.

The three-day conference will review working papers dealing with administration, engineering, health, finance, planning and Amman's district affairs.

Convoy of food, medical supplies leaves for Baghdad

AMMAN (J.T.) — Shipments of food and medical supplies from Jordan continue to flow towards Iraq in the wake of the devastating war that brought about so much destruction and sufferings for the Iraqi people.

A convoy of trucks laden with food and medical supplies and other basic materials donated by Bader District of Amman left for Baghdad Friday. The shipment was organised by the Popular Committee for Supporting the Iraqi People in the Amman area working in conjunction with the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS).

A spokesman for GUVS said that the food and medicine sent Friday was estimated to be worth JD 200,000.

Another shipment of 150 ton-

nes of medicine, medical equipment and food supplies left Agaba for Baghdad. The shipment, donated by the people of Jordan, was raised and organised by the Arab Emergency Health Committee. The committee, formed by the Arab Doctors Union, has been active in organising similar shipments over the past month and recruiting doctors and specialists and nurses from Jordan, Sudan, Yemen, Palestine and the Maghreb Union countries to go to Iraq and offer supplies and medical treatment to the Iraqi people.

All donations and relief services are being coordinated with the Iraqi National Red Crescent Society. The committee has been issuing repeated calls to the Jordanian people to donate generously for this noble cause.

Government supports plans to find new markets for local products

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government is going ahead with plans to support programmes by the private sector firms to open new markets for the national industrial products abroad in the wake of the Gulf crisis which had brought about severe damage to the economy, according to Minister of Industry and Trade Ziyad Fariz.

"The Ministry of Industry and Trade is also studying a set of programmes designed to help improve the quality of production by offering loans and grants to local firms," said the minister at a lecture addressed to the Jordanian Exporters Society at the Marriott Hotel in Amman.

"Work is underway to establish a corporation for guaranteeing exports and to transform the ministry-affiliated Jordanian Commercial Centres Corporation (JCCC) into a fully-fledged com-

pany whose aim will be to encourage Jordanian exports," the minister said.

"Jordanians have to learn a lesson from the series of crises they encountered in the past and exporters have to try to avoid the negative aspects of past experiences and improve the quality of products to win new markets abroad," Fariz added.

"What Jordan needs now is continued endeavours to open new markets and improve the quality of national manufactured products," the minister said.

His lecture came one week after Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Al Dughmi called on industrial concerns and businesses in Jordan to refrain from laying off workers and said that everything possible should be made to settle problems related to workers in cooperation with the Federation of Labour Unions and the

Chamber of Industry. The lay offs were an obvious symptom of the serious consequences of the Gulf crisis on Jordan's economy. Some businesses and industrial firms reported a drop in operations by up to 90 per cent.

The Jordan Industrial Estate Corporation (JIEC) last month reported that not a single investor had requested to start a business at the Sahab Industrial City, near Amman, since the outbreak of the Gulf crisis last August.

Industrialists and businessmen as well as officials at the Ministry of Industry and Trade have been discussing proposals for intensifying efforts to find new markets for Jordan's national products abroad. According to JIEC officials, some of the industries at the Sahab Industrial City have closed down altogether.

Vatican urges solution to Middle East problems

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Apostolic delegation in Amman has published a full report about the Vatican summit which ended in Rome last week. The summit, attended by heads of Roman Catholic churches in the Middle East, discussed the Gulf war and its consequences as well as its impact on the region.

According to the report, His Holiness Pope John Paul II told the gathering that the meeting was a reminder of the great suffering of the people in the affected areas, but that he wanted to hear from each one of them a report about the spiritual and material situation of the faithful under the shadow of the Gulf war.

The Pope said that the heads of these churches bear witness of this ordeal that had befallen the people of this region who have been exposed to death, devastation and displacement, and noted that the war had certainly created hatred and fears among the people because the desire to wage war had existed long before August 1990.

The Pope reviewed the situation in Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, the Gulf states and Iraq, and said the war had sown new seeds of dissension and discord and therefore, the church has a duty to perform and that is to manifest the need for amity and affection among people in the East and West, said the report.

The report quoted the Pope as saying that he called the heads of Middle East churches together not for a political purpose, but rather to remind them of the duty of urging the world to establish justice and to enhance the spirit of brotherhood.

The Pope urged the international community to reflect on the consequences of the devastating war in the light of international principles of justice and high morals. These, according to the Vatican, include: respect of each sovereign state and its territorial integrity, work for resolving all issues that have been outstanding over the past decades, and which had served as the root cause of many conflicts and restricting arms trade deals and reaching agreements to stem their proliferation.

According to the report, the Pope drew the world's attention to the fact that the natural wealth was distributed inequitably, noting that poverty poses a threat to peace. Therefore, he said, the world economic order should help nations to share the wealth and not to show selfishness, and advanced countries should pay the right price for raw materials and help transfer modern technology to the poor nations and arrange for them to settle debts in a convenient and appropriate manner.

Voicing concern over the situation in the Middle East in the

wake of the war, the Pope said that poor people, especially those of Palestine and Lebanon, would be exposed to a greater danger if their old problems do not have a speedy solution.

According to the report, the Pope has warned that any further delays in dealing with these issues or in hampering dialogues are bound to constitute a major danger that could rekindle new conflicts.

Archbishop John Tauran, who attended the meetings, outlined the Vatican's role since the outbreak of the Gulf crisis. Tauran, who is the Vatican's state under-secretary, said that the Roman Catholic church had been issuing calls to the faithful for prayers and has set into motion feelings of affection and the need to offer moral and material assistance to those affected by the war, noting that the Vatican has set up a special body, known as *Cor Unum* to organise the distribution of aid and to propagate the call for peace.

At the diplomatic level, the archbishop said that the Vatican had intensified its contacts and issued special appeals to presidents George Bush and Saddam Hussein. He noted that the Vatican is committed to the following principles: no procrastination in dealing with the Middle East region's issues, and the path to peace should be through dialogue and not war.

War is over, but for some it has just started

By Debbie Lovatt
Special to the Jordan Times

ZARQA — Many families who fled Kuwait during the Gulf war find that their problems are only just beginning. Living and working in Kuwait they used to send money to relatives in Jordan, but now they are in need of financial support themselves and are ashamed to take from those they once used to help, but are forced to.

Nema Mahmoud, 49, and a mother of six says, "first we went to Amman, but it is too expensive there. We couldn't afford a place to live, we couldn't afford to eat. So we came to Zarqa where we have family and they help us as much as they can."

Mrs. Mahmoud was noticeably ashamed of her present situation and surroundings.

"Our house in Kuwait wasn't like this, it was clean and spacious," she said pointing to the walls which were mottled with damp. The five by four room serves as a sitting room by day and a bedroom at night.

Two weeks ago the Mahmoud family were sharing their tiny rented apartment with another family.

"We used to be thirteen people

living and sleeping in this one room. But the other family went back to Kuwait. We couldn't stay in Kuwait, but we can't live here either," said Mrs. Mahmoud in a matter of fact way.

Jordan's economic problems were worsened by the Gulf crisis and the ensuing war, and unemployment has risen sharply.

"My husband is out now looking for work. Everyday he looks for work, but there isn't anything. The Jordanian government can't help us, they haven't even got enough to help their own people. The government here should help us and then the Kuwaiti government should pay them back," said Mrs. Mahmoud.

Abdullah Mahmoud Abdallah, brother of Mrs. Mahmoud, said his main worry since fleeing Kuwait was the education and support of his children.

"My son is studying in Italy and is receiving money for tuition and living expenses from a Christian organisation. It's embarrassing. If I can't pay for him I'd like him to come back and be with his family. I don't have any money to get him back though," said Mr. Abdallah.

"I used to have a well-paid job in Kuwait, but everything stopped when the war started. People

like me used to help poor people and now we're poor. But we're not used to it and we're ashamed to ask for help," he continued.

Amongst other families the complaints are the same.

"In Kuwait there was no bread, no food, no electricity, no petrol nor gas so we left to come here, but here we can't afford much of these things," said Mrs. Bushra Abdul Latif.

Information about Kuwaiti treatment of workers of Jordanian-Palestinian origin is scarce, but reason enough to make this family not want to return to the emirate.

"My husband has to go back to Kuwait and get our money; we are going to stay here. We are afraid of going back to Kuwait because there are many problems there between Kuwaitis and Palestinians. We heard they are fighting them for any reason," explained Mrs. Abdul Latif.

Thinking aloud whilst starting through the open doorway at her children playing outside, Mrs. Abdul Latif said:

"I don't know how we can survive here though. There is no work so no money. If the Kuwaitis won't let my husband take our money from the bank in Kuwait we are stuck."

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.

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The struggle for peace: Will Israel be a party?

AT A TIME when many people saw a glimpse of hope and some positive elements in U.S. President George Bush's speech to the U.S. Congress on the terms for a just and honourable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Tel Aviv was quick to dismiss the pronouncements as nothing new. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir avoided direct comment on President Bush's specific reference to U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of exchanging territory for peace, but let his spokesman Avi Pazner to rebuff Washington's precise endorsement of resolutions 242 and 338 by stating that "from what (Israel) saw of (President Bush's) speech, it seems there is no change in the U.S. stance."

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy was a bit more honest and blunt in interpreting America's latest declaration on the basis for the resolution of the Palestinian case and the broader Arab-Israeli conflict when he admitted that Israel and the U.S. were "at odds" over many issues and that Washington wanted to "pressure us." Levy in fact went further in his arrogant reaction by telling the world that his country was not about to seek shelter in bunkers because of this so-called U.S. pressure. This defiant attitude from the Israeli leadership would put to the test the sincerity of Washington in its pursuit of a permanent settlement of the Palestinian problem.

President Bush has openly and clearly committed himself and his administration to enforce the relevant U.N. resolutions, and in an expeditious way, for that matter. He did so while offering a substantial increase in his country's aid to Israel by more than \$600 million over and above the \$3.5 billion that pour into the Jewish state's coffers every year.

Tel Aviv may have a cover to interpret Washington's pious statements on the Middle East as nothing new because in fact they have heard it all before only to see them crumble on the rock of Israeli intransigence and obstinacy. So while it is premature to judge the White House's explicit incorporation of the Security Council resolutions in its peace bid to end the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Arab side is entitled to know how Washington is going to deal with the continuing Israeli rejection of every peace initiative that does not suit their taste. The least that the Arab parties can expect from the U.S. this time is a new resolve and determination to tell the Israelis that they could not run away from peace for ever and get rewarded for it. President Bush has now a chance to stick to his guns, just as he consistently and stubbornly did with Iraq and translate his new policy guidelines into deeds for the entire world to take note of. Anything short of that would further erode his credibility, not only within the Arab World but all over.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

As James Baker embarked on a tour of Arab countries, the U.S. administration announced that the Palestine question should be resolved on the basis of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, but made it clear that Washington would not impose any solution on Israel, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Saturday. This declaration means clearly that the United States does not intend to impose international legitimacy on Israel, as it had enforced it on Iraq, the paper said. This statement, plus Israeli officials' calls for holding a regional rather than international conference to force the Arabs to recognise the state of Israel without abandoning the occupied territories, prompt us to believe that the U.S. administration is not serious about its ideas of settling the long outstanding issue in our region, the paper pointed out. For their part, the Israelis consider themselves responsible for deciding the future of the Palestinian people who they suggest must have autonomy rule according to Israel's own plans and no more, the paper noted. It said that Israel has no right to anything to do with the future of the Palestinians, but they must withdraw from the occupied Arab lands in implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions which Bush has said, constitute the basis for peace and which are backed by the European Community and the world at large. By avoiding measures through the Security Council towards forcing Israel to withdraw from Palestine, the U.S. administration is thus consecrating the principle of double standards which it has been following all along, and is pursuing means that can only serve the self-interests of Israel which has been occupying Arab land since 1967, the paper noted. The paper said that the international conference is not an aim by itself but rather a means to ensure an Israeli withdrawal; and this conference will be necessary should the U.S. continue to condone Israel's aggression and occupation.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily cautions Jordanians against the feeling of optimism at President Bush's recent statements about the Palestine issue and a solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict. Tareq Masarweh likens the situation now with that which prevailed in the wake of the 1973 October war when the Arab World welcomed Richard Nixon as if he was a war hero placing all their hopes in his hands. He says the result was the Camp David accords which served the interests of Israel. The writer also reminds his readers of the feelings of optimism that succeeded the World War I when the Arabs expected to see the western powers honouring their pledges. But he says the result was the Sykes Picot agreement followed by the Balfour Declaration which gave Israel a homeland at the expense of the Arab World. Following the World War II, the writer adds, American President Harry Truman preached a new world order with the creation of the United Nations Organisation, and said that it came to ensure independence and freedom for all peoples of the world, but nothing of this kind has emerged in the wake of the war.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Jordan's economy ready to take off

By Dr. Fahed Al Fanek

NOW that Gulf war II has ended, the stage is set for a long period of reconstruction, healing of wounds, resumption of ordinary life and a cautious eye on the accelerating political developments aiming at reformulating the political landscape of the whole region.

Jordan's economy is relatively in a good state. Its production capacity is safe and intact, in both sectors of goods and services. Companies did not close down under the pressure of the Gulf crisis, nor did any hotel or other business or public utility go out of business. All are ready to take off and resume production at full speed and capacity when given the chance.

Fortunately, the industrial companies which used to depend heavily on the Iraqi market did not halt their operations at any time during the seven-month crisis. They continued to operate, albeit at a lower level of capacity. At least one shift a day was maintained. Thus the industrial sector kept its administrative and productive cadres intact. Of course the stocks of finished products were piling up, because even the lower volume of production was in excess of demand in the absence of the Iraqi and Gulf markets. The policy was to produce more than you can market and hope for a solution to the crisis that may be around the corner.

Commercial banks cooperated with their industrial clients, because they had no other option. Banks extended more credit facilities to industrial outfits to keep the machines running and the companies healthy. The stocks of finished products will eventually be converted into cash as soon as export markets are reopened as expected.

During the crisis, the government directed all classified hotels in the country to remain open, even under complete absence of domestic and foreign tourism, especially in Aqaba, Ma'in and the Dead Sea. This policy proved to be right. Hotels maintained the minimum set of staff to enable operation to resume at any moment without interruption and without going through the costly process of reopening a closed hotel.

Farmers in Jordan Valley were advised by the experts of the Ministry of Agriculture to refrain from growing the vegetables that far exceeded the needs of the domestic market, because export may not be possible as long as Saudi Arabia denied Jordanian drivers visas to enter the kingdom and reach out to the Saudi or to other Gulf states' markets. The farmers hurriedly decided to take the risk and grow products meant for the Gulf market, hoping that the crisis will go away and the extra ordinary restrictions will be removed before the crops were ripe for export. Events turned in their favour and borders may be open before the season. It is realistically hoped now that Saudi Arabia will lift its ban on Jordanian drivers and trucks, and allow them to reach all the Gulf states soon, as has always been the case.

Some other damages need more time to be cured. Tourism for instance may begin to recover soon, starting with domestic tourism. Foreign tourism may take a year or two before it could recover momentum.

Transit activity to Iraq came to a standstill but life will return to

this dynamic sector as soon as sanctions against Iraq are formally lifted.

The Iraqi crude oil may also become available again as soon as the loading facilities in Iraq are repaired, but it is more difficult to speculate on how long that process will take, as the extent of the damage is not determined yet.

For years to come, Aqaba will continue to serve as the major sea outlet for Iraq on the Red Sea, as has been the case during the last ten years.

Jordanian contractors will naturally have a big role to play in the reconstruction of Iraq, because they are familiar with the Iraqi market and have a very large unutilised capacity to offer.

However, the negative impact of the Gulf crisis on the Jordanian economy may need longer time to be totally removed. Among these long term damages are the flow of Arab aid and expatriate remittances. It is wiser not to expect that every thing in this regard will be back to normal in no time. Arab aid may not be resumed in a year or two, and any improvement in the remittances will certainly be gradual and slow.

Therefore, Jordan will continue to be in bad need for foreign aid, grants and soft loans. It is not enough to follow up on the collection of whatever foreign commitments Jordan has at the moment, it is imperative to look for more of these sources, to make up for the short fall in the foreign exchange earnings, and to revitalise the economy by embarking on an intensive investment programme, designed to create jobs for the unemployed, currently estimated to be in the order of 25 per cent.

Sari Nusseibeh retraces the history of the occupied territories and sets out the options for international action that would achieve real peace.

A Palestinian's plea from his cell in Ramleh jail

Dr. Sari Nusseibeh is a prominent Palestinian figure from the West Bank. He was arrested in January and is being held without trial for three months on Israeli suspicions of passing information to Iraq about the location of its Scud missile hits on Israel. He categorically denies being a spy and the absence of a criminal charge strengthens the belief that his arrest was politically motivated. Nusseibeh, aged 41, is an Oxford-educated professor of philosophy at Birzeit University. His name has often been suggested as a potential Palestinian delegate in peace talks with Israel. The following article appeared in the March 4 issue of the Guardian newspaper.

SOME Israelis saw the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 as a possible blessing in disguise. Israel may now be able to trade these territories, it was thought, for the recognition by the Arabs and peace in the Middle East that had eluded it since its inception in 1948.

The international community, also cognisant of this opportunity, passed resolution 242 through the United Nations Security Council, calling on Israel to withdraw from the territories as a preliminary step towards a final peace.

The Arab World (at the time with the exception of Syria) welcomed that resolution, not so much with the intent of following up the withdrawal clause with the political steps that would have led to the recognition of Israel, as with the hope that a redress of the territorial imbalance created by the June 1967 war would be achieved by a return to the status quo ante. In its turn, Israel, being perhaps aware of this Arab attitude, but also wishing to ensure better negotiating advantage, refrained from setting resolution 242 in motion, and embarked instead on a process of "fact-creation" by which it hoped to limit off areas in the territory from which it was called upon to withdraw.

Following the limited 1973 war the political map once again changed. Resolution 338, passed in the context of that war, now clearly called for a direct "linkage" between the parties concerned. The Arab countries (including Syria this time) accepted resolution 338. This resolution, together with some tentative diplomatic activity involving the U.S. and

the Soviet Union, sent a clear message to Arabs generally, but to Palestinians particularly: no longer was it possible to hope for a mere return to the status quo ante. Territory was to be exchanged for a final peace treaty with Israel.

Within the Palestinian community, a debate began to take shape over a basic question. If the State of Israel (and hence the entire Palestinian problem) was now to be addressed in one full sweep, then wouldn't it be better to make use of the arrangement by condensing Palestinian national aspirations and establishing a Palestinian State on the territory to be released in exchange for peace? Throughout the seven- and eight early eighties the debate raged on, sometimes taking a human toll. Those arguing in favour of recognising Israel (real peace) in exchange for the establishment of a Palestinian state were treading on such virginal political ground that, in order to maintain a measure of credibility in their own constituency, they often resorted to what was necessarily a language that didn't make much of an impression on Israel or on the world community.

Indeed, so contradictory had the language and practice of Palestinian politics become, that, even as the Palestinian National Council (PNC) met in 1983 and endorsed two separate peace plans essentially calling for a two-state solution, members of the council would still get the floor to PLO leader Issam Sartawi, who in a sense embodied the idea of the two-state solution and the corollary call for Palestinian-Israeli dialogue. Later in the year Sartawi was to join the list

of assassinated PLO leaders. But as far as the outside world was concerned, what was required was not a set of individual statements made by some PLO mavericks, but a clear statement of policy by the PLO leadership, recognising resolution 242 and Israel's right to exist.

While all this was happening among Palestinians, Israel's "fact-creating" process had transformed into a terrifying dynamic towards naturalising the state of occupation and making it a permanent feature. East Jerusalem was both "geographically expanded" and annexed. More than half of the territory occupied was arbitrarily confiscated. The use of water (and hence agricultural activity) was severely restricted. Economic and industrial growth were stunted. Housing permits and urban development (to respond to population growth) were restricted. And, in the face of mostly civilian resistance to Israel's policy of strangulation, a systematic policy of punitive suppression was employed.

Finally, in December 1987, the intifada broke out. At first, it was simply an expression of anger, frustration and resistance. Very quickly, however, it managed through its clandestine leadership to articulate a pragmatic political programme: freedom from occupation, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. The threshold had been passed. No longer was the idea only that of some PLO leaders, or of isolated intellectual groups within the national movement; it had become the battle-cry of the majority.

In November 1988, the PNC met in Algiers. Unlike previous occasions, the Palestinian people's highest legislative assembly, inspired by the sacrifice and strategy of the intifada, this time explicitly recognised Israel and the two-state solution. After almost exactly 40 years of political wilderness, of suffering, and of conceptual trialling, for the Palestinians, they had arrived at the shore, bearing a peace

formula that would enable themselves and Israel to live at peace together in the Holy Land.

HISTORY however does not wait. On the one hand, even those in Israel who are theoretically committed to the land versus peace principle (eg. the Labour Party) had in the meantime been pursuing a policy on the ground that ran directly opposite to their declared principle. More disconcertingly still, by the time that the Palestinians had prepared the ground for a peaceful settlement, the ruling establishment had so changed in Israel that a new government was by now ensconced whose philosophy was precisely to negate the "land for peace" formula.

Naturally, the Palestinians were rudely shocked. Not only did the emerging face of the new Israel seem incredible: the international community's lack of serious action and intervention, seemed equally provocative. One day in May 1990 almost 15 Palestinians were killed in separate, but related incidents. An appeal was made to the Security Council to send a commission of inquiry to the occupied territories, and to place the territories under international supervision. The U.S. acted in the Security Council to veto the draft resolution.

A few months later, Iraq tanks rolled into Kuwait and Palestinians saw an entirely different posture unfold on the part of the international community. Not only was one Security Council resolution manufactured after the other, but the threat of actual force was brought to bear in order to support the implementation of these resolutions. The more the allies developed this posture, right up to the point of declaring war on Iraq, the more Palestinians felt betrayed by those allies, and the more hostile they felt towards them. Furthermore, given Israel's intransigence and lack of response to the Palestinian peace initiative, the Palestinians saw in Iraq's defiance of the allies and its antagonism towards



Israel a single glimmer of hope in an otherwise totally bleak and hopeless situation. At no time, however, did Palestinians endorse or support Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

As for today, the international community, which has shown singular willingness and capability for intervention in the Middle East region, has a clear choice to make: either it will wish that its intervention be interpreted as expressing a commitment to international legitimacy in the Middle East, or it will accept that its intervention be interpreted simply as a neo-imperialist attempt at ensuring control of an oil-producing region. If the latter, then the Gulf war will not be the end of the story, but simply the beginning of a new era of conflict between the First and Third worlds. If the former, then the allies will have to take further steps towards ensuring the implementation of other U.N. resolutions, specifically bringing an end to the Palesti-

nian-Israeli conflict on the basis of first Israel's withdrawal, and second the Palestinian people's right to freedom and sovereignty. If the allies were to help bring such a settlement about, it would be the beginning of a totally different story. A story of co-existence and peace, of cooperation and construction, and of stability. The Palestinians and the Israelis, living side by side as equals, not as occupier and occupied, each in their own state, can contribute far more to themselves and to the world at large than either of them can ever do as long as the sense of injustice prevails. What is required however, is consistency on the part of the international community: a manifest willingness to apply the same standard of international legitimacy in one region of the Middle East as in another. Only thus would the war declared by the allies be vindicated, and moderation prevail.

Building by building, battle for Jerusalem's old city persists

By Sergei Shargorodsky
The Associated Press

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM — In a tiny, vaulted room dimly lit by candles, a man in a skullcap crouches over his prayer book. "A Jew has been murdered here," says a handwritten sign outside.

The house is the latest landmark in the battle for Jerusalem's old city: a building in the Muslim quarter occupied by Jewish settlers after the stabbing death of a fellow disciple.

Elhanan Attalia, 27, whose throat was slashed last week, had studied at the 9-year-old Ateret Cohanim Seminary, which has become a hub of tensions amid the old city's delicate mosaic of peoples.

Israel says Jerusalem is its eternal capital. Palestinians want the part of the city captured in the 1967 Middle East war, including the old city, as the capital of their would-be state.

About 7,000 Christians, 3,000 Jews and 18,000 Muslims live crowded within the old city walls, near the site of Jesus' burial, the

Jews' holy western wall and some of the most revered shrines of Islam.

The area is divided into traditional quarters — Armenian, Christian, Jewish and Muslim. The Arabs are ever-wary of encroachment, especially since the supreme court ruling blocks them from moving to the Jewish quarter.

Ateret Cohanim — Glory of the priests in Hebrew — was founded in 1982 to spearhead Jewish settlement in the Muslim quarter. The students say its main building housed a seminary that was abandoned during the Palestinian revolt in 1996.

"An Arab guardian was given the key. He concealed the seminary's 3,000 books at his living quarters and kept watch over the house for 30 years," said Tehillah Raps, a spokeswoman for the seminary.

The mission of the seminary is to prepare for the coming of the Messiah and the rebuilding of the ancient Jewish temple. It has expanded into several buildings along a road that winds through an Arab vegetable market.

The seminary has links to religious settlers in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Its 150 students wear the skullcaps of religious Jews but, unlike the ultra-orthodox, they serve in Israel's army.

"We are not fanatics, as people like to portray us," said Yossi Baumol, the seminary's director. "We want to live in coexistence with our neighbours. We only want to study and live in Jerusalem."

But Arab neighbours say Ateret Cohanim has a different side.

"Relations with the settlers are getting worse day by day," said Walid Zurba, a shopkeeper, complaining that Arab children often get beaten by seminary students.

"If there is any love between us and the Israelis, they are spoiling it... their hearts are full of hatred," Zurba said.

Ateret Cohanim has a security headquarters — with portable radios and elaborate alarms — near a heavily guarded house that right-wing politician Ariel Sharon bought in 1987 as a symbol of

Jewish presence in the area.

The seminary drew worldwide attention last April when it moved about 150 Jews into a hospice owned by the Greek Orthodox Church.

Ateret Cohanim's latest takeover of two buildings threatens another battle. Two Arabs claim ownership and have sued to evict the students.

Avraham Goren, who represents the Arabs, told the Jerusalem Post newspaper that the buildings were expropriated by the Israeli army in 1969 after a guerrilla attack.

The settlers have "no legal basis to their claim. The students simply had nothing to lose by taking this step," Goren said.

Rabbi Beni Elon of Ateret Cohanim said the movement bought the buildings some time ago but delayed moving in until after Attalia's slaying. "We have all the documents to prove our ownership," he said.

Palestinians say friction between neighbourhood presidents and the Yeshiva students has heightened since the slaying, in which eight Arabs are held,

LETTERS

Zionist intentions

To the Editor:

THIS refers to your article of March 3 on Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI).

The BCCI is a bank 100 per cent owned by Arabs with the majority of management coming from Third World countries. In terms of assets it is rated as the second largest Arab bank in the world, after the Rafidain bank, with total assets standing at \$23 billion (balance sheet 1989).

Being an Arab owned bank, BCCI's rapid growth was not favoured by the Zionist lobby in the U.S. which downplayed it in 1988 with money laundering charges of \$13 million over 2½ years investigation. As per U.S. government estimates, money laundering business in the U.S. is to the tune of \$200 billion per year; 26 major banks, including Bank of America, were convicted or fined on similar charges, before the BCCI case, which the world hardly heard of.

The Arab World must have become accustomed to Zionist intentions by now. Downplaying an upcoming Arab institution is no surprise and should be expected from Zionist media. What is painful is the Arab media playing into their hands without realising the harm they incur on Arab institutions. I sincerely wish that a paper of your calibre before publishing any article would try to investigate the facts on your own. Releasing extracts taken from a foreign media could only help to promote Zionist intentions against Arabs as a whole.

Waqar A. Khan
P.O. Box 3154
Amman.

هذا من اجل

Despite end of war, Gulf Peace Team continues mission

By Sana Atiyeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Despite the end of hostilities in the region, the Gulf Peace Team — an international, independent and non-partisan organisation — believes that the conflict in the Gulf has not yet ended. That is why three members of the team today leave for Baghdad with a convoy of humanitarian medical supplies.

"The conflict is still continuing," said Gulf Peace member Eric Hoskins, a Canadian doctor specialised in public health and scheduled to depart for Baghdad with the medical shipment today.

"Human beings and civilians (in Iraq) continue to die and suffer, and the international community has opted to choose that," Dr. Hoskins said, referring to the continued U.N.-imposed sanctions, especially concerning food, against Iraq.

He told the Jordan Times that the U.N. decision to continue the food embargo against Iraq was "prolonging the war."

The convoy of four trucks, which is scheduled to leave this afternoon from the Red Crescent hospital in Amman, is carrying five tonnes of medical supplies that arrived last week from the Gulf Peace Team in Austria and Arab societies there. This is the third shipment sent to Iraq since the war started by the Gulf Peace Team in collaboration with the Jordan Red Crescent Society.

Dr. Hoskins estimated the total of medical supplies so far sent to Iraq at 25 tonnes.

The Gulf Peace Team was set up last October when peace activists from around the world got together to set up a peace camp on the Iraqi-Saudi border town of Ar-Rafid to try to avert the outbreak of hostilities. They spent the first ten days of the war watching the U.S.-led allied planes heading for Iraq, before they were evicted by the Iraqi authorities to Baghdad and later to Amman.

"We are still between two armies. First we were stuck between bombs and artillery and now there are the sanctions," said Peace Team member Andrew Jones, assistant professor of journalism at Northeastern University in Boston and a documentary filmmaker.

"Even if there is peace, there is no justice. We want to show the world what the situation is like over there," Mr. Jones, who is also accompanying the convoy, told the Jordan Times, referring to the continued sanctions against Iraq and its effects on Iraqi civilians.

The three members of the team, which also includes Indian lawyer Bela Bhatia, will deliver the medical supplies to the Iraqi Red Crescent Society and monitor the humanitarian situation in Iraq for a few days.

Dr. Hoskins said that they would negotiate with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society on "how best to spend the funds for purchase of medical supplies. We want to end up with a list of what is needed and participate jointly with the Iraqi organisation to get a better idea of how people are coping."

Dr. Hoskins said that \$1 million had been collected from Canada for humanitarian supplies for Iraq and that knowing what the essential medical needs would help in purchasing the necessary items.

"But not one single ounce of food can enter Iraq for Iraqi civilians because of these sanctions," Dr. Hoskins complained, adding that only infant milk formula for less than six-month-old babies was permitted according to the embargo rules.

Arafat

(Continued from page 1)

with Arafat because of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) chief's support for Iraq following Baghdad's takeover of Kuwait last August.

"Arafat deliberately chose to fight in the same trench as (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein. If he wants to climb out of it well and good, but we don't yet consider he has done so," said Mr. Poo, whose country is current EC president.

Mr. Poo, who travelled with the foreign ministers of Italy and the Netherlands and met 17 Arab and Israeli ministers, His Majesty

King Hussein and a Palestinian delegation, said Palestinians did not give him the impression they wanted Arafat replaced.

"The Maghreb (north African) countries, particularly Tunisia and Libya, say Arafat is still the Palestinian movement's uncontested leader," said Mr. Poo, who returned on Friday.

The Europeans are anxious to play a role in a long-term peace plan for the Middle East and see the achievement of an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a top priority.

The EC backs Arab demands for an international Middle East peace conference on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.

The battle for water: Storm clouds gathering

By Stuart Young

PRAYERS for rain were held late last year in Israel and in Jordan as the region experienced its driest winter in 70 years. The deepening water shortage in the Jordan Basin, accentuated by three years of inadequate rainfall, is reaching crisis proportions. Steadily, the region is heading for a catastrophe, and fears of a war over water resources are growing.

In Israel, water supplies to farmers were cut by 20 per cent from Jan. 18, and Agriculture Minister Raphael Eitan is expected to declare a national water emergency if no substantial rains fall soon.

In Jordan His Majesty King Hussein recently held prayers with the country's leading religious figures, reflecting the growing desperation of the water situation. In the absence of an agreement, both Syria and Israel are taking large shares of River Jordan; leaving Jordan with less than a third of the total available water. Jordan's non-renewable underground reservoirs are being over-exploited at the rate of 15 per cent a year, leading to a projected, disastrous 50 per cent shortfall by the year 2005.

Meanwhile, Syria is suffering from the extra demands Turkey's Attaturk Dam is placing on the Euphrates. Syria's other main water source, Now Syria is planning a series of seven small dams to divert water from the Yarmouk which is used by Syria, Jordan and Israel, and is the Jordan's main tributary.

Water experts have predicted that the region's non-renewable water reserves will run out in five years' time. This forecast has dire consequences for the Palestinians living in the occupied territories. Israel restricts Palestinian water consumption to 20 per cent of the shared mountain aquifer, or underground reservoir, under the Jordan hills. Thus, the Palestinian water supply

has barely increased since Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967. Aside from a chronic shortage of water for domestic use, the restrictions are crippling Palestinian agriculture. Enormous areas of land owned by Palestinians are not allowed to be irrigated by the Israeli authorities, who have banned more than a handful of new wells by Palestinians. At the same time, since 1967, Israel has sunk more than 40 deep-bore artesian wells which now pull up 440 per cent more water than all 300 of the lower pre-1967 Palestinian wells. The result is that Palestinian farmers and municipalities now find they have to buy water from Mekorot, the Israeli water company.

"The question is one of the conduct of an occupier to an occupied people. The status of the occupied territories is governed by the Fourth Geneva Convention and by the Hague Regulations of 1907," says leading West Bank lawyer Raja Shehadeh. "The occupier has no right to exploit the natural resources of the territories it has occupied and Israel is doing precisely that."

The inequality is even further exposed when the consumption of Jewish settlers in the West Bank is considered. Their use per head is around nine times that of Palestinians, reflecting in part the huge density of these settlements upon irrigated agriculture. Nadil Al Khatib, Bethlehem municipality's chief sewage engineer explains: "96m cubic metres a year is planned for the settlers (for a population of around 100,000). Palestinian town altogether consume about 136m cubic metres a year, for around one million people." Al Khatib adds: "The quantities available for domestic use are not sufficient to satisfy demand. The shortage for agriculture is crucial."

Israel's dry winter has meant the over-pumping of the country's non-renewable water re-

sources. However, pumping from the Sea of Galilee stopped on Nov. 25 because of the lake's low level, just seven centimetres above the "red line" of 213 metres below sea level. Forty per cent of Israel's water derives from the Sea of Galilee. The remainder originates in two large underground reservoirs, the coastal and mountain aquifers.

These two aquifers constitute most of Israel's non-renewable water supplies, and are being over-exploited by 15 per cent a year, risking irreparable damage. Without new water sources the country will enter one of its most severe crises. By the year 2000 Israel will have a 30 per cent water shortfall.

Possibilities of conflict

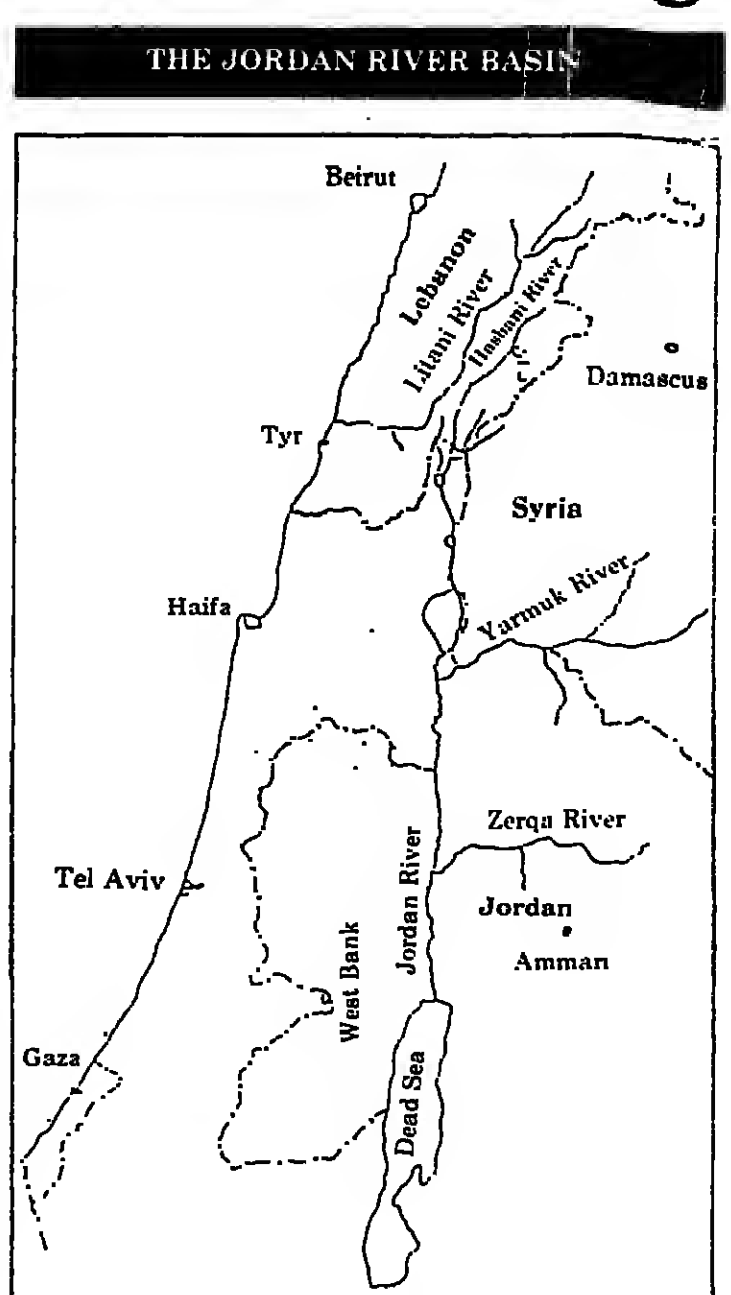
One alternative, the River Jordan, which is already heavily exploited, presents the possibility of conflict with Syria and Jordan. The "Lebanese Option," whereby Israel would divert part of the River Litani, would require a massively increased Israeli military presence in southern Lebanon. The Nile is a possible option, and it has already been suggested as a solution to the chronic water shortage in Gaza, where overuse of the coastal aquifer has lowered the water level so much that sea water has seeped in. The aquifer is in danger of being permanently ruined and drinking water in Gaza is dangerously salinated, and almost unfit for agricultural use, let alone human consumption. Aharon Wiener, former head of Mekorot, argues: "less than a quarter of one per cent of Nile would solve completely the problem of Gaza." Adil Tamimi, a Palestinian engineer and researcher, goes further: "The diversion of one per cent of the Nile would solve all of Israel's problems." However, he adds, this is presently out of the question.

Equally impossible is the importation of water from Tur-

key, a water-rich neighbour. Other more improbable sources being mooted are Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The major alternative being pushed by Eitan is desalination of sea-water. However this seems likely to prove economically inviable. Israeli water expert Elisha Kalli points out that desalinated water will be "around ten times more expensive than the cost of water now." Kalli argues that agriculture, which consumes 961m cubic metres, around 70 per cent of Israel's water supply, should be cut back. "Agriculture is now less than five per cent of Israel's GNP, and seven per cent of its exports, as compared with around 30 per cent in the sixties. So it is no longer important to the economy."

However, water is being used by Israel's right wing as a reason for never withdrawing from the occupied territories. The agriculture ministry paid for full-page newspaper advertisements earlier this year in which it was argued that ending the occupation would leave Israel powerless to prevent Palestinian "mismanagement, poor planning, lack of knowledge or plain neglect" of the shared mountain aquifer and "endanger its very existence." The minister, Raphael Eitan of the right "Tsommet party, clearly has another interest: promoting agriculture as the back bone of further settlement inside the occupied territories. The Israeli Water Commission is also planning an increase in agricultural output to feed the new Soviet immigrants. This would require an increase of around 350m cubic metres a year.

Ironically, water is pushing the region's powers to the brink of war, but at the same time it may be the reason for a peace agreement. Such an agreement could guarantee the stability of the water supply for all the parties and open up the possibility of large-scale water



transfer from water-rich neighbours to Israel, the occupied territories and Jordan. Nadil Al Khatib says the water-rich countries must broker water for peace: "Without settling the Palestinian question I can

hardly believe any Arab country would be involved in a regional water solution with Israel. So Israel needs the water and the Palestinians need the peace." — Middle East International.

Baker

(Continued from page 1)

Syria and the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates — will discuss a plan they approved in Damascus on Wednesday to set up a peacekeeping force to maintain security in the Gulf.

Abdul Maguid told reporters the ministers would "brief (Baker) on ideas they discussed at their meeting in Damascus on the situation in the region."

He said he would also meet Canadian External Affairs Minister Joe Clark, who is visiting Riyadh.

Britain and France, key members of the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq have welcomed the Arab allies' plan.

Baker is scheduled to meet President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt on Monday. On Friday Cairo welcomed U.S. President George Bush's call for peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

"The United States' commitment to work with countries of the region to reach a comprehensive settlement of their problems and to curb the arms race proves

the truth of the American pledges," a presidential statement said.

"(It) reinforces hopes of opening a new chapter in the history of the region in which peace and stability replace war, violence and destruction," said the statement, carried by the Middle East News Agency, MENA.

Clark, on a post-Gulf war tour of the Middle East, said on Saturday it was necessary to move quickly to promote peace in the region.

Clark, whose country joined the U.S.-led coalition, arrived in Saudi Arabia on Friday night and will visit Kuwait on Sunday.

He previously visited Israel and Jordan and will go to Syria next week.

Asked what prospects he saw for Middle East peace, Clark told reporters: "I think there's a more constructive attitude... there's a general recognition that opportunities have been created and that they have to be taken advantage of."

"I found that in Jordan, I found it among Palestinians with whom I spoke in Jerusalem. I think that is evident through the region and must be encouraged. "Our own view," Clark added, "is that we have to move quickly on these matters and show some

signs of progress quickly."

In occupied Jerusalem Palestinian nationalist leader Faisal Al Hussein told Reuters there would be no meeting with Baker without a formal go-ahead from the PLO.

"The decision to boycott the Americans was taken inside the occupied territories. It won't be changed unless approved from Tunis, I mean the PLO," he said.

Asked about press report that the PLO has given the green light for the meeting, he said: "We do not deal with a green light. We need a decision, and it hasn't come yet."

Journalists

(Continued from page 1)

border post, 280 kilometres east of Amman.

Baghdad said the two U.S. soldiers were captured in southern Iraq.

U.S.-led forces still occupy a portion of southern Iraq. Iraq handed over the journalists and U.S. soldiers to the Red Cross in Baghdad Friday night and they spent the night in the Iraqi capital. The journalists were seen on television on Friday night and appeared well.

The 40 journalists disappeared

after setting out from Kuwait last Sunday for the southern Iraqi city of Basra, torn by protests against the government of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Western governments and news media were deeply alarmed about the missing journalists as conflicting reports had them in government or opposition hands.

Iraq's discovery of two more American prisoners of war caused surprise among the U.S. military in Saudi Arabia. Iraq had previously turned over 45 allied prisoners and said it held no more.

A U.S. military spokeswoman in Riyadh said Saturday that the two unidentified soldiers had been missing for several days.

Reuters photographer Frederic Neema, among scores of journalists waiting for the group, said: "They looked fine. They were smiling."

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) listed the journalists as 11 Americans, 17 French, two Britons, three Italians, two Norwegians, one Spaniard, two Brazilians, one Irish citizen and one Uruguayan.

The U.S.-led coalition has returned 294 Iraqi POWs but still holds around 60,000.

It has promised to return them, starting next Monday, at the rate of several hundred a day.

Ten allied POWs, the first to be freed by Iraq last week, were also repatriated through Jordan's Ruweisbi border, the main escape route for hundreds of thousands of refugees who fled Kuwait and Iraq during the seven-month-old Gulf crisis.

The United States planned to fly the two U.S. soldiers to Bahrain and then take them aboard the U.S. hospital ship Mercy for a medical examination. U.S. sources said.

A Red Cross official in Amman said the journalists were expected to hold a news conference at the Intercontinental Hotel.

A U.S. military spokeswoman in Riyadh said of the two soldiers: "They were transiting between units when they were lost. They were last seen in Kuwait, many miles inside the Kuwaiti border. It is possible they became lost and drove out of territory under U.S. control."

She said that two other U.S. soldiers were also unaccounted for. They were last seen driving a vehicle well inside Saudi Arabia. She did not name them.

"We are searching for them. It's very likely they are with another unit and just haven't reported in," she said.

Twenty-one U.S. former prisoners of war, freed by Iraq this

week, will arrive back in the United States Sunday, the U.S. military said Saturday.

U.S. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney and General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will welcome the freed prisoners at a ceremony at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, U.S. Central Command said in a statement.

The Americans were among 45 allied POWs freed in two groups by Iraq this week. Many were airmen shot down over Iraq during the six-week Gulf war.

Central Command said the 21 would leave Bahrain for the United States at 10 p.m. (1900 GMT) Saturday aboard an air force VC-137 and a C-141 medical evacuation aircraft. They were due at Andrews at about noon local time (1700 GMT) Sunday.

"After being reunited with their families, the 21 service members will depart for designated service medical facilities for follow-on physical exams and medical care and later debriefing by military intelligence specialists," the statement said.

It said the former prisoners would not be permitted to give media interviews at least until after the medical examinations and debriefing, expected to take several days.

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Soviet Union's Berezhnaya beats Germany's Drechsler in long jump

SEVILLE, Spain (AP) — Soviet jumper Larisa Berezhnaya upset German world record holder Heike Drechsler Saturday to win the women's long jump title at the World Indoor Athletics Championships.

Drechsler's second round leap of 6.82 metres looked set to win the gold until Berezhnaya, who won the bronze medal two years ago in Budapest, stretched to 6.84 in the last but one round.

In the last round Drechsler went for one final attempt to take the title but lost her stride pattern just yards from the board and managed only 6.68.

Romania's Marieta Icu placed third with a leap of 6.74, ahead of another Soviet competitor, Inessa Kravets, who managed 6.71 with her last jump.

Drechsler's silver was the first medal won by a unified Germany in an international track competition, although the 26-year-old sprinter-jumper, whose world mark is 7.37 metres, was favoured to get the gold.

Another world record holder, Merlene Ottey, overcame a loss in the 60 metres by cruising into the semifinals of the 200 metres Saturday.

The Jamaican raced against just two other runners because of withdrawal. Another, Cisse Mfomatsa of Guinea, was disqualified for running out of her lane.

Despite the lack of competition, Ottey ran the second fastest qualifying time, 23.30 seconds.

The fastest was Germany's Andrea Thomas with 22.95. Another German, Grit Breuer, won her heat in 23.49.

Soviet sprinter Irina Sergeeva, who beat Ottey in the 60 metres on Friday, also won her heat in 23.35 seconds.

Ottey was unbeaten in 73 previous races going back 18 months before Friday's loss.

In the men's races, Britain's Linford Christie, who won the 80-metre silver medal behind American Andre Cason Friday, cruised into the semifinals of the 200 metres. His time, 21.35 seconds, was only seventh fastest. Bulgaria's Nikolay Antonov was the only runner to beat 21 seconds, clocking 20.95.

Americans Thomas Jefferson and Daron Council also made it

to the semifinals. The final is Sunday.

American hurdler Greg Foster was the fastest qualifier in the 60-metre heats as he bid to erase the memory of Indianapolis 1987.

At his only other appearance in the championships, the 32-year-old hurdler collided with Canadian Mark McKoy in the Indianapolis final and the two crashed to the ground, leaving another American, Tonic Campbell to race to victory.

In Saturday's heats, Foster cruised to victory in the second race in 7.52 seconds.

McKoy, running in the first heat, was second fastest qualifier for the semifinals later Saturday with 7.58. Another American, Jack Pierce, also made it to the semifinals by winning in 7.62.

In the women's 60-metre hurdles, world record holder Ljudmila Narozhnikova of the Soviet Union won her heat in 8.00 seconds, but her time was beaten by two French runners.

Ann Figueira and Monique Ewanje-Epee both won their heats in 7.98 seconds.

In field events, there was disappointment for American indoor champion Charles Simpkins, who made three no jumps and failed to make the final Sunday.

Leading qualifier was Soviet jumper Igor Lapshin with a leap of 16.31 metres.

On Friday's opening day, sprint star Ben Johnson was beaten in the 60-metre final.

Canadian Johnson, returning to competitive action after a two-year suspension for taking steroids, failed even to get a medal. The gold went to Cason, 21.

Cason, who also beat Johnson at Los Angeles in the Canadian's second comeback race, did it again by darting to victory in 6.54.

He was the fastest man through the heats and semifinals and proved the formbook right.

Johnson started well but could not lead the surge of power in the opening 20 yards.

The Canadian, 29, had an early lead but Britain's Linford Christie powered past him in the middle of the race.

Then came Cason, who found the acceleration in the second half of the race and dipped late to snatch the gold from Christie.

Alesi takes provisional pole at U.S. Grand Prix

PHOENIX (AP) — Jean Alesi, making his first start for Ferrari, took the provisional pole from the McLaren-Honda of defending race and series champion Ayrton Senna in the opening round of qualifying Friday for Sunday's season-opening U.S. Grand Prix.

Senna, the best qualifier in Formula One history, appeared to have the top spot locked up with a lap nearly a full second faster than his bitter rival and Alesi's Ferrari teammate, Alain Prost of France.

But the 26-year-old Alesi, a Frenchman who surprised everyone here last year by leading most of the Formula One race in an underpowered Tyrrell-Ford until the Brazilian Senna was able to catch and pass him came up with his fast lap on his final trip around the newly configured downtown street circuit.

Alesi was clocked in 1-minute, 23.519-seconds, translating to 99.656 mph (160.381 kph). Senna's time was 1:23.530, with Prost

staying third at 1:21.507.

Several turns were altered and the track shortened by about a tenth of a mile to 2.312 (3.720 kilometers) due to construction in the crowded downtown area. As expected, the circuit is faster this season, with 23 drivers faster than Austrian Gerhard Berger's 1990 record-setting pole lap of 1:28.661 (151.211) in a McLaren-Honda.

To earn his first Formula One pole, Alesi will have to hold off two-time series champion, Senna, three-time Formula One champion Prost and the rest of the top contenders in another 60-minute qualifying session Saturday.

Riccardo Patrese of Italy was fourth Friday at 1:21.726 in a Williams-Renault, followed by Emanuele Pirro of France at 1:21.876 in a Dallara Judd. Pirro was one of four drivers who made it into the regular qualifying process by leading a 60-minute pre-qualifying session that opened the weekend action Friday morning.

who had 6.55.

"I thought my first part of the race was poor but there was outstanding acceleration in the middle part of the race and I finished well," Cason said.

"It was a business trip to come here, to perform well, stay in focus and win a medal," Cason said. "Fortunately it was a gold medal."

Nigeria's Chido Imoh clocked 6.60 ahead of Johnson who managed 6.61.

"The power was not there," said Johnson, who was hoping to replace the Olympic gold that was taken away with an indoor gold for keeps.

"We have been trying to put things together in the last three or four races but there is more work to do," Johnson said.

"When I get going in the outdoor season things will be different," said the Canadian, who plans to challenge Olympic titlist Carl Lewis and Leroy Burrell, the world's fastest man indoors and outdoors over the past year, at the World Championships in Tokyo.

Cason is one of Johnson's fans and he paid credit to the Canadian.

"He's an outstanding competitor and had to come off 28 months of chaos and mental anguish," said Cason, referring to Johnson's suspension and drugs controversy.

"He finished fourth here after trying to put things together and his indoor performances have been incredible. He shows the true heart of an athlete."

Ottey breezed through her heat and semifinals and was set for a showdown with Germany's outdoor 100 and 200-metre European Champion Katrin Krabbe.

But along came Sergeyeva, a Soviet who had run the previous fastest time this year, 7.03.

While Ottey had an unsteady start, the Soviet exploded from the blocks and raced away in 7.02, also a championship record.

Ottey, unbeaten outdoors and indoors for a year and a half, clocked 7.08 and Cuba's Liliana Allan finished in 7.12.

The only other gold medal presented Friday went to Switzerland's Werner Günthör, the outdoor world champion who won the shot with a heave of 21.17 metres.

Austria's Klaus Bodenmueller gained the silver with a put of 20.42 and American Ron Backes heaved 20.06 to collect the bronze.

The American 1,600-metre relay team clocked the second fastest time ever in the heats.

The quartet of Andrew Balman, Chip Jenkins, Antonin McKay and Willie Smith breezed into the final by clocking 3 minutes 05.53. The world record is 3:05.21 by another American team at Glasgow, Scotland, in March 1989.

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Graf reaches semis at Slims of Florida

BOCA RATON, Florida (Agencies) — Steffi Graf, seeking to end a slump that has cost her the No. 1 ranking, won a title that has eluded her since last November — semifinals.

Graf, eliminated in the quarterfinals of her two previous tournaments this year, beat Meredith McGrath 6-3, 6-1 to advance to the semifinals in the Virginia Slims of Florida.

The top-seeded German will play No. 8 Nathalie Tauziat, the lone surprising entry in the final four. Tauziat beat a gummy Mary Joe Fernandez, the No. 3 seed, 6-1, 7-5.

The other bracket will pit 14-year-old Jennifer Capriati, the No. 4 seed, against No. 2 Gabriela Sabatini. Capriati won her quarterfinals match against Claudia Porwik 6-1, 6-4, and Sabatini beat Regina Rajchrtova 6-2, 6-2.

Capriati reached last year's final in her professional debut before losing to Sabatini.

Graf's record streak of 186 weeks at No. 1 will end Monday, when she is replaced in the rankings by Monica Seles. But after falling behind 3-2, 10-15, she was dominant against the 16th-seeded McGrath.

"I'd like to say she's playing very well," McGrath said. "Because if she's playing bad, I'm in a lot of trouble."

Graf credited herself with a "solid performance" and said she knew McGrath would be unable to maintain her initial high level of play. When asked about the recent misfortune in quarterfinals matches, Graf responded with a baffled look.

"It didn't really have anything to do with tonight's match," she said. "It didn't come into my mind at all."

Tauziat, seeded eighth and ranked 17th, fired seven aces, against the fifth-ranked Fernandez, who was slowed by a sprained left ankle she injured in practice Thursday. Fernandez is the highest-ranked player that the 23-year-old Tauziat has defeated.

"I beat her in December during an exhibition (in France), and I said, 'why not this time?'" Tauziat said. "She was a little bit injured, but I think I played a good match."

The Frenchwoman has yet to win a set in 12 matches against Graf.

"I'll have to go to the net and take my chances," Tauziat said. "I have nothing to lose."

That was the case for Capriati a year ago when she lost to Sabatini in the final, 6-4, 7-5. Then, Capriati was an unranked 13-year-old and Sabatini was the top seed.

"There was much more pressure then (on me) than this year," Sabatini said. "Much more."

Now, a Capriati victory wouldn't be a shock — after all, she's the No. 4 seed.

"Maybe people will be expecting more," Capriati said, "and there'll be a little more pressure. But I don't really feel it at all."

For Capriati, less than her best was more than enough against Porwik. Capriati lost three service games to Porwik, had no service winners and double-faulted four times in a two-game span.

"I wasn't happy at all with my serve," Capriati said.

But Porwik, who also was beaten by Capriati in last year's tournament, lost her serve six times.

"If you are to make a tight match out of it, you have to play your best," Porwik said. "I didn't do that today. She had to play just her normal game. She didn't do anything special."

Rajchrtova started well but quickly faded against Sabatini, who has lost only 11 games in the tournament.

"My game is at a very good level," Sabatini said. "I need now to have a tough match to test how I'm really playing."

Capriati, with a long earring with a peace sign dangling from her left earlobe, says she is not making a political statement.

"It's not political," said Capriati, of the 1960s-styled earring. "It's the 'in' thing. I want peace — it's cool."

Capriati is one of the shining stars of the women's international tennis circuit but she's still just a kid — she won't even turn 15 years old until March 29.

Capriati, however, is no stranger to the grown-up world of professional tennis.

This week's Virginia Slims of Florida event marks her first anniversary as a professional.

Easy success, however, may soon be over for Capriati, according to some of her fellow-players.

A player's second year on tour is often a frustrating experience bringing about the so-called "sophomore jinx."

"Now people expect much more of her," said Steffi Graf, the dominant force in women's tennis the past three years.

"But, I think she has the mental strength and the right people around her, so she'll be all right. She has so much potential."

Gigi Fernandez, Capriati's doubles partner this week, said the second year can be a difficult time.

"Being in your sophomore year is always hard for everybody," said Fernandez, who said Capriati was not playing as well as last year. "I think she'll feel the pressure because it happens to everyone. She might be the exception but I doubt it."

Capriati said she is aware people are expecting her to falter, but is totally unconcerned.

"Maybe, the 'I know me better,'" said Capriati, acknowledging that opponents have studied her game. "They'll know how to play me better. But I'll just go in, play my best and try not to think about it."

Basically a baseline, Capriati is working with former touring pro Tom Gullikson to expand her game and develop a serve-and-volley attack.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY MARCH 10, 1991

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: A good day to enjoy through social activities and to plan a well rounded course of action for the weeks ahead. Take time to show your affection to your household and close associates.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You certainly are under very big and happy influences from early today so make a point to get out in the social whirl and impress all persons.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Many private interests are excellent for you now and it is a very good time for some happy romantic expression and for pleasing all about you.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Now you are able to get together with friends and acquaintances and to get their good wishes in almost any direction that you wish to go in.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Whatever you wish in the world of outside activity can be yours so enjoy yourself and your respect for bigwigs and prominent persons.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be alert to those new openings that are now arising that give you the chance to enjoy yourself and make big headway towards our year's talents.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This is your time to show that you are the one who does attend to your obligations in a scrupulous and painstaking fashion and by doing so you gain much backing.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Entertain associates at some attractive place for in so doing you find you gain considerable admiration from them and get them to go along with your new plan.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Enthusiastically get at your project and add some colour and charm to your environment whether it be at home, an office, officially or wherever.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You awaken with a most happy feeling of wellbeing if you are living in accord with your planetary position and can enjoy whatever comes up.

CAPIRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You need to entertain or do something to have more charm and comfort and colour at your residence now so be sure to do so without delay.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You are positively brilliant today and not a moment should be lost so go out on the town and get allies to what you want the most.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Money can now flow into your pocket or bank account by the ideas you get now especially those arising from entertainment or adornment.

Today's child: If your child were born today she or he shares a great deal of wisdom and understanding with those who reach out to them for assistance. Having a tendency to forget themselves in assisting others is a double-sided sword if they neglect their own needs and family members in the process.

THE BETTER HALF

By Harris

HARRIS 2-13

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Japan may let U.S. face risk of currency loss on Gulf aid

TOKYO (R) — Japan does not plan to increase its contribution to the U.S.-led Gulf war effort from 1.17 trillion yen despite the recent rise of the dollar against the yen, Vice finance minister Masumi Kogaya said Friday.

"It is up to the recipients to decide when and what amounts to convert into their own currencies," Kogaya told a news conference.

Japan planned to value its \$9 billion Gulf contribution at 1.17 trillion yen, based on the 130.00-yen rate for the dollar on Feb. 19 when parliament's lower house passed a supplementary budget to fund the aid.

But the dollar's climb to around 136.30 yen, Friday's closing rate, means that if Japan transferred 1.17 trillion yen now the contribution would be only about \$8.6 billion.

If the dollar keeps on rising, as many market analysts say it will because of optimism about a U.S. economic rebound, the value of Japan's Gulf contribution will keep falling.

Asked if he thought the United States would complain about a shortfall, Kogaya said: "The U.S. may just have to understand."

The yen total, included in a special supplementary budget, has already been already passed by parliament, he said.

Finance Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto has made no secret of his discomfort about the dollar's recent strength.

This week, he said repeatedly that he doubted the current level of the dollar against the yen accurately reflected economic fundamentals in the United States and Japan, and said he was unhappy with recent fluctuations in the foreign exchange market.

The U.S. government is believed by dealers in Tokyo to have made it clear it expects \$9 billion from Japan regardless of the exchange rate. Japan has

already decided all the funds will be transferred in yen.

Dealers said they expect a flurry of dollar "talk-down" statements from Japanese financial authorities in coming days, and possibly some from U.S. Federal Reserve officials who may be working with Japanese authorities to help the transfer.

Dealers have also reported rumors that the Bank of Japan may have been "checking rates" in world foreign exchange markets.

Rate-checking, when a central bank asks commercial banks to quote buy and sell levels, is widely feared as a market.

"Financial authorities have been quick to express their unhappiness with the dollar's recent gains," said Toshio Yoshikawa, customer dealer at Citibank.

Japanese government officials are now negotiating the conversion with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the organization that manages the Gulf peace fund and through which Japan will funnel its Gulf contribution.

Government sources said they hope to decide the terms of the conversion to dollars by the middle of next week.

The GCC comprises Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

Because Japan has decided to transfer its Gulf aid in yen, foreign exchange risk will remain an issue for the United States after the transfer is made, dealers said.

Central bank watchers have said the United States and Japan may agree to immediately exchange at least part of the treasury's yen for dollars in an account the bank maintains at the Federal Reserve Board (FRB).

That would reduce the FRB's foreign exchange risk and dampen the impact from converting more than one trillion yen to the open market.

Kuwaiti oil minister wants Western role in OPEC as in war

MINA ABDULLAH, Kuwait (R) — The United States, Britain and France may get a greater say in OPEC's policy decisions because of their success in the Gulf war, Kuwait's oil minister said Saturday.

Rashid Al Amiri told reporters the Western allies had proved their friendship for his oil-producing state and added:

"They must have a say in protecting their interests."

Asked if this meant they would have more influence with OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries), Amiri said: "I think so."

Amiri, inspecting damage at the giant Kuwait National Petroleum Company refinery which was bombed by Iraqi forces during their retreat from Kuwait, said it would be a long time before Kuwait would export oil once again.

"We are importing products ... petrol and butane to meet local needs. We will be forced to continue to import," he said.

He said refinery repair would have to wait while the oil industry dealt with its number one priority — putting out hundreds of oil well fires that are eating up as much as six million barrels a day of Kuwait's oil reserves.

He said Kuwait had no intention of giving up the oil production quota assigned to it by OPEC.

"We will keep our quota and ask other Gulf states to produce on our behalf," he said.

Kuwait was producing 1.5 million barrels a day of crude oil before Iraq sent its army in on Aug. 2.

Amiri said the Kuwaitis were already talking to oil officials in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates about providing

oil for the petrol stations Kuwait operates in Europe.

"Rebuilding Kuwait will take a huge amount of money and to get this money we must sell our oil," he said. Compensation from Iraq, in line with United Nations resolutions, would help turn his country's oil spigot back on, the minister said.

Kuwait's ambassador to Japan said Friday resumption of crude oil production in Kuwait will take months, not weeks, even though it is the most accessible on earth.

Abdul Aziz Al Sharikh told journalists the production process in Kuwait was as simple as digging a hole, and that there was oil in areas which had not been set alight by the Iraqi army.

"But it will be months, not weeks," he said. Resumption of production of petrochemical products would take even longer.

Sharikh said the cost of a three-month emergency plan to restore basic services in Kuwait would be \$1 billion. All the contracts for this had already been awarded.

A second plan for total reconstruction would take more than five years and cost tens of billions of dollars. Priority in contracts would go to companies from nations that sent soldiers to take part in the liberation of Kuwait, he said.

Sharikh said he expected Japanese firms were also likely to win contracts in view of the size of the reconstruction task and the close economic ties between the two countries built up over the past 40 years.

To finance reconstruction, Kuwait might have to borrow or sell some of its overseas assets, but would not do so on a large scale. Kuwait was a long-term, strategic investor and the rebuilding would take a long time.

World Bank enters new phase as Barber Conable steps down

WASHINGTON (R) — The World Bank, formed in the ashes of World War II, is getting a new leader at a time when Gulf war reconstruction, Eastern Europe and other problems are presenting the lending agency with a host of challenges.

Bank President Barber Conable has decided to return to private life and the White House is sponsoring New York banker Lewis Preston to replace him as officials are assessing the economic impact of the Gulf war.

At the same time, the new economic landscape of Eastern Europe and a proposal for Moscow to be granted a special relationship with the bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) add new challenges for the Washington-based institution.

"The bank has not had such a full plate in years," said one official, adding: "The future could be increasingly difficult."

The bank, formally titled the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, was founded at the Bretton Woods economic conference of 1944 primarily to finance the reconstruction of Europe.

The bank now has 149 members and works closely with the IMF to provide long-term, low-interest loans for industrial projects in developing countries.

Conable, a former member of the U.S. Congress, has made changes during his five-year tenure that will make it easier for Preston.

"The institution is on excellent financial footing and this should help Preston tremendously," said one former bank official.

Conable, who will leave in September, completed a divisive but badly needed reorganization of the bank that some officials describe as the most far-reaching ever carried out at a multilateral financial institution.

The reorganization has made the bank more responsive and more flexible in dealing with its member countries, bank sources said.

Preston worked all his life for the J.P. Morgan and Co. banking house and was its chairman and chief executive officer from 1980 to 1989.

In a statement, he said: "I am excited to be nominated as president of the World Bank at a time

when the challenges before the bank have never been greater."

"While prospects for bilateral funding from major countries are limited because of fiscal restraints, Eastern Europe and the developing world have growing needs," he pointed out.

Assets the tall, softly-spoken Preston brings to the World Bank include an extensive knowledge of the international debt crisis and long international experience in general.

"He really knows everybody and how things work," said one banking source. "If there is going to be trouble in the world financial system, there is nobody better for the job."

The list of problems awaiting Preston is daunting. Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union, will undoubtedly continue, in fits and starts, its move towards a market system as the World Bank and others help guide it.

The Latin American debt crisis continues to stalk policy-makers and many countries in the region face difficult times as they try to reform their economies.

The very poor of Africa seem to face an almost hopeless economic situation that few believe can be ameliorated without radical changes.

"There is every prospect there will be more poverty in the world in the year 2000 than there is now," said one official.

Preston will face a complex situation in the Gulf region as he guides the bank in whatever role emerges for it in reconstruction. Many believe it will take years to make good the devastation caused by the conflict and the bank may serve as a clearing house for development funds.

Iraq and the countries allied against it are all members of the bank and Preston will be forced to walk a fine line in avoid charges that the institution has been politicized by the United States.

"It would be tragic if the bank became a political tool of the victors in the conflict," said one source. But those familiar with Preston's style said this was unlikely.

"He is used to going his own way," said one official.

British Airways cuts services

LONDON (R) — British Airways (B.A.) PLC, struggling with recession and the effects of the Gulf war, said Friday it was withdrawing services to five destinations.

B.A. said it would not resume its already suspended flights to Stockholm and Barcelona from London's Gatwick Airport.

A company statement said B.A. would also discontinue its service from Gatwick to Banjul and Freetown in West Africa on May 19 and flights to Karachi in

Pakistan on April 1.

The airline said it would continue to serve Barcelona and Stockholm from London's main airport, Heathrow, and it would still fly from Gatwick to the Pakistani capital, Islamabad.

B.A.'s flights between London and Bermuda will be cut to four per week from six.

"The route cuts are a regrettable but inevitable consequence of the ongoing recession and the Gulf war on air transport and tourism," a B.A. spokesman

said.

Earlier this year, the airline announced the withdrawal of services to Ireland and the Bahamas and flights between Gatwick and Amsterdam. The closure of the Bahamas service has been brought forward to April 14 from June 1.

Services to Bahrain resumed Friday and to Tel Aviv Saturday. Flights to both cities were suspended during the Gulf war because of high insurance charges and a drop in passenger demand.

Air France suspends short-time working strategy

PARIS (R) — State-owned Air France said Friday it was suspending plans to introduce short-time working from April 1 because of better prospects for the airline industry since the end of the Gulf war.

But it said it was keeping other cost-cutting measures to be introduced to offset the drop in traffic since the end of last year due to the Gulf crisis. These include a wage freeze, early retirement for 200 management staff and shedding staff who have reached the end of short-term contracts.

Air France workers have been taking action in an attempt to get the company to rescind the emergency measures.

The CPDT trade union said there had been stoppages at both Paris airports, Roissy and Orly, as well as the Air France headquarters this week, and it was trying to organise further action ahead of a meeting between management and worker representatives on March 19.

"These sizeable losses which have resulted from the recent events cannot be offset without these very rigorous measures which are indispensable to the maintenance of the company's competitiveness," the French flag carrier said.

But it said it would need all its staff working full time to meet an anticipated pick-up in air traffic.

"The way the international situation is evolving is giving rise to conditions which are again favourable to the development of air traffic... in this context, Air France has decided to relaunch its programme of flights for the spring and summer," it said, adding it would be resuming publicity campaigns.

Fed acts to push interest rates lower

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve (Fed) acted Friday to push interest rates lower.

The central bank added extra reserves to the banking system in a move that was widely interpreted by economists as a signal that the central bank had embarked on another round of credit easing.

Economists said they believed the Fed's new target for a key interest rate, the federal funds rate, was six per cent, down 0.25 per cent from the old target.

The federal funds rate, the

interest that banks charge each other for overnight loans, is an important bellwether of Fed intentions. The Fed can control the rate by either adding or draining cash from the banking system.

"We thought the funds rate had to be nudged down a little more to get us out of this recession, but we were surprised that they acted as quickly as they did," said Dana Sorrentino, an economist at Citibank.

The funds rate was cut to 6.25 per cent from 6.75 per cent on Feb. 1.

U.S. unemployment worsens

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The U.S. unemployment rate surged to 6.5 per cent in February, the third consecutive monthly rise, the Labour Department said Friday.

The jump was the highest monthly increase since 1986 and showed that the recession was still severely disrupting the economy. In January unemployment was 6.2 per cent.

Payroll jobs outside the farm sector continued to decline steeply with 184,000 positions lost in February, compared with 233,000 lost in the previous month.

The jobless data, providing the first reading of U.S. performance in February, confirmed that many parts of the economy remained weak. The country has been in recession, defined as six months of declining output, since late last year.

The manufacturing sector, which has shed about one million jobs in the past two years, again was the hardest hit in February, losing 127,000 jobs after a 79,000 decline the previous month. Detroit carmakers continued to lay off workers, which also hurt other transportation equipment sectors.

Retailers, facing dire sales fi-

gures and bankruptcies in recent months, pruned their workforce in February by 69,000 employees. This loss accounted for much of the shrinkage in the service-producing sector — the largest sector of the economy and considered vital to its health.

Despite the grim employment news, many analysts are hoping that the economy is near its bottom and that the swift end to the Gulf war will stimulate an early recovery in consumer and business confidence.

Many economists expect the jobless rate to peak around 6.9 per cent before recovering.

Meanwhile, the twin traumas of war and recession not only slashed American consumers' spending in January but also sharply curbed their appetite for new debt to finance the purchases.

A government report showed that consumer installment debt, which seldom declines, plunged at an annual rate of four per cent in January, the steepest drop since a five per cent annualised decline four years ago.

The report followed earlier accounts showing a significant cutback in spending by consum-

ers, whose confidence plummeted to a 10-year low in January with the outbreak of the Gulf war and confirmation of a recession.

Consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of the nation's economic activity. Consumer credit includes all consumer loans except mortgages and home-equity loans.

Still, analysts believe anecdotal evidence indicates that weakness in some areas of the economy has been bottoming out recently.

Federal Reserve (Fed) chairman Alan Greenspan told Congress Wednesday that following the end of the Gulf war, customer traffic picked up in real estate offices and auto showrooms, raising "the possibility that stronger consumer demand may be emerging."

But that demand was not in evidence in January.

The Commerce Department reported earlier that consumer spending fell 0.6 per cent, its biggest drop since a 1.3 per cent decline in January 1987. It also said retail sales were down 0.9 per cent, including the second consecutive 1.1 per cent monthly drop in automobile sales.

The Fed said consumer installment debt fell by a seasonally adjusted \$2.11 billion following a revised 0.6 per cent decline in December.

Canada's unemployment jumps above 10 per cent

OTTAWA (R) — Canada's unemployment rate rocketed to 10.2 per cent in February, the highest since October 1985, and economists said the number of jobless people will rise further.

Statistics Canada, a government agency, released figures Friday showing that unemployment rose by 78,000 in February to 1,399,000.

Economists expect no turnaround in the jobless rate until interest rates drop, giving the recession-hit economy a boost, and the Canadian dollar weakens, stimulating exports.

Tough international competition is hobbling the Canadian corporate sector, analysts said.

"A combination of slowing investment and job losses has cut back on consumption expenditures, and that exacerbates unemployment," said Michael Bradley, an economist at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The jump is the largest monthly increase of the current recession, which started last April, and the number of unemployed is 43 per cent higher than in March 1990 when the upward trend began, the government agency said.

"I would see it climbing before the end of the recession to 10.3 or 11 per cent," said Richard Beaulieu, treasurer of the

Laurentian Bank of Canada.

Unemployment jumped by 56,000 in Ontario, Canada's richest and most populous province, while it rose by only 6,000 each in British Columbia and Quebec.

High federal and provincial government deficits, the central bank's tough monetary policy and a slide in corporate profits have hoisted unemployment, said Surinder Suri, chief economist with the London Life Insurance Co.

"It's a bit of a vise grip we are faced with," he said. "Our forecasts show unemployment peaking at around 10.6 per cent and declining slowly," he said.

Statistics Canada said declines were seen in the manufacturing, trade and communications sectors.

Economists say the job losses rival those of the 1981-82 recession.

"We expect the recession to be most severe in Quebec and Ontario where most of the manufacturing base of Canada lies," Beaulieu said.

"The turnaround will come when the minister of finance and governor of the Bank of Canada abandon their target of zero inflation or very low inflation rates and accept the fact that we can live with some inflation," Brad-

field said.

Air Europe, ILG seek protection, regulators act to stop trading

LONDON (R) — Britain's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) issued notices to suspend operating licences held by troubled International Leisure Group (ILG), Britain's second largest travel firm and owner of leading independent airline Air Europe.

"The matter of most immediate importance is the position of passengers... we have issued notices," CAA spokesman Bryce Hales-Dutton told Reuters late Friday.

Earlier, a British high court appointed administrative receivers to all five major subsidiaries of the ILG group, including Air Europe, threatening the biggest collapse of a British travel com-

pany since 1982 when Laker Airways went under.

Debt-laden ILG sought protection from creditors after running out of cash.

It made losses of £50 million (\$93 million) in the three months to end January adding to total liabilities of £480 million (\$896 million), administrators KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock said.

Earlier, many of Air Europe's 37 aircraft were seized as banks, led by Citibank N.A., rushed to protect themselves before the group could reach the courts.

The airline, which employs 2,000 people and carried 3.5 million passengers last year, was forced to cancel all flights Friday.

causing chaos at airports across Europe.

ILG's fortunes have been hit by the Gulf crisis, recession and the collapse this week of major Swiss shareholder OMNI Holding A.G.

A last gasp injection of £40 million (\$75 million) from OMNI, just days ago had already been spent, the administrators said.

Emergency talks with ILG's bankers failed as OMNI itself applied for protection from its creditors.

The administrators acted quickly late Friday to sell ILG's 49 per cent stake in Germany's NFD Luftverkehrs A.G. — one of four stakes in independent European carriers — to giant store chain Karstadt A.G.

But they said they faced a race against time to save the group. "There is a relatively limited

window of opportunity... we are not talking in terms of months," administrator Phil Wallace told a news conference.

ILG companies, which include the Intasun and Club 18-30 tour operators, hold about 20 per cent of the British market and the receivers said earlier they hoped to continue trading.

But Catherine Leach, spokeswoman for the Tour Operators Study Group (TOSG) said: "They are not in a position to trade."

The TOSG, which operates an industry compensation scheme, said it was calling in ILG's £63.5 million (\$119 million) bond and would arrange for holidaymakers to be brought home over the next few days.

The CAA decision formally gives ILG three days to respond before the tour operator licences are revoked.

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Moscow's proposed union treaty highlights human rights respect

MOSCOW (AP) — Respect for human rights would become the "most important principle" unifying the 15 Soviet republics under a draft union treaty published Friday.

The proposed treaty, the cornerstone of President Mikhail Gorbachev's efforts to hold the country together, has been tentatively approved by eight of the 15 republics, but is opposed by six others.

Yet the document appears unlikely to satisfy demands for sovereignty that have been made by many of the republics, including Georgia and the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

While the draft treaty makes some concessions, it says the central government will retain control over the armed forces, foreign policy, the national budget, foreign trade, law enforcement, space research and communications.

In other areas, the draft treaty calls for direct election of the president, and a limit of two consecutive five-year terms.

Currently, the 2,250-member Congress of People's Deputies elects the president, and there is

no limit on terms of office.

With its publication by the Soviet News Agency TASS, the draft formally was sent by Gorbachev to the parliaments of the republics "for further consideration." No process or timetable for its adoption and signing has been set.

The treaty enshrines many of the reforms that Gorbachev has made since assuming power in 1985, including freedom of religion and observance of civil rights.

It says the republics "recognise that the most important principle is respect for human rights in accordance with universally recognised norms of international law."

The draft was released only days ahead of a March 17 nationwide referendum on whether to preserve the union. Gorbachev has ordered the voting to take place in all republics, but several have refused to cooperate.

On the sensitive question of how much power republics should have, the proposed treaty contains some concessions, guaranteeing republics a share of hard currency earnings from sales

of gold and mineral resources, and allowing them to establish direct diplomatic ties with foreign countries.

But it skirts many of the key questions dividing Gorbachev and his chief political rival, Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian Federation, the largest of the republics.

It does not specify, for example, how tax revenues and ownership of natural resources will be shared between the republics and the central government.

It says the central government and the republics will work together to establish a unified "strategy for socio-economic development" and will jointly run the country's financial, energy and transportation systems. But it does not spell out how disagreements will be settled.

Yeltsin has said the treaty should give control of most of the economy to the republics, leaving the national government in charge of only defence, railways and energy.

Despite Yeltsin's qualms, the Russian Republic has tentatively agreed to the draft, along with

the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenia, Kirgizia, Tadzhikistan and Byelorussia.

The six republics that have refused to participate in drafting the treaty are Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia, Armenia and Moldova. A seventh, Azerbaijan, has accepted some but not all of the treaty's provisions.

The treaty outlines the Soviet governmental structure without any mention of the Congress of People's Deputies, which presumably would be eliminated. It calls for retention of the smaller, standing legislature, the Supreme Soviet.

The Congress of People's Deputies is elected by a complicated combination of direct citizens' votes and votes by organisations.

According to the draft, the treaty would become the basis of a new constitution, to be adopted by a Congress of Representatives from the member republics.

The treaty says republics have a right to leave the union following procedures set by the members of the union. But it does not specify what those procedures would be.

Conditions worsen for Albanian refugees in Italy

BRINDISI, Italy (R) — The flight of thousands of Albanian refugees in the southern Italian port of Brindisi worsened Saturday with food still scarce and the danger of epidemics growing, local officials said.

Huge crowds milled around the port area. Many wandered aimlessly around the town begging for food while others camped in squalid conditions at local schools.

But there was still no immediate sign of organised help from central government or relief agencies.

"The government has completely underestimated this," Brindisi Mayor Giuseppe Marchionna said. "It's incredible that they have sat there for nearly four days now with their arms crossed."

About 15,000 refugees, fleeing economic hardship in their communist homeland, have arrived in Brindisi this week in a flotilla of dilapidated ships.

About 5,000 others also reached Italy before them, since the latest exodus began about two weeks ago.

Typical of their attitude was that of 28-year-old refugee Andri Scuti. "I'll go anywhere but I won't go back," he said.

Scuti spent the night along with thousands of others in one of 36 local schools but planned to return to the dock area to escape the smell of sanitary conditions worsened.

He said there had been no food provided at the school and no instructions on what to do. The only official he had seen was one policeman on guard outside the school gate overnight.

Reporters visiting the schools were continually asked for food and women held up their babies, begging for nappies.

Sanitary conditions in the schools were made worse by a burst pipe which cut water supply to many parts of the town.

"Health is our worst problem," said Maria Grazia Colucci, a senior aide to Brindisi Prefect Antonio Barile. She said local authorities were preparing an army camp and several holiday villages nearby to ease the overcrowding.

A major problem was the large number of children among the refugees who had apparently come over without their parents, she added. Matching lost children with parents was another headache.

"If the army had been used in this first place a lot of this would never have happened," she added.

At Brindisi's regional hospital, the president of the local Health Workers' Union said the situation was deteriorating. "Existing structures are not holding up," Giampiero Pennetta added.

Pamphlets had been issued in Albanian, urging the refugees to wash themselves and burn soiled clothes to avoid the risk of hepatitis, scabies and ticks.

Dr. Antonio Piro, vice-director of the hospital, said: "There's a risk infectious diseases will spread first among the refugees themselves and later possibly among the local population if things continue like this."

Shekhar to stay on until India's budget approved

NEW DELHI (R) — India's president sought Saturday to counter charges of favouritism by making clear Chandra Shekhar, whose resignation as prime minister sparked a crisis, could stay on so that a crucial budget is approved.

President Ramaswamy Venkataraman had been accused of favouring former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi after Shekhar quit three days ago, provoking a battle over who should rule in the run-up to an early general election.

But the president's office said Shekhar had been told he could stay on.

"This is to settle any doubts, because many people have raised all sorts of doubts," a presidential aide said.

Shekhar was not immediately available for comment.

Gandhi, the other candidate for caretaker prime minister, emerged from a Saturday meeting with the president and denied he had ever considered taking office "by the back door."

The president's advice to Shekhar may be enough to get an interim budget, essential to fund India's government after March 31, through the fragmented Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament).

Hard-hit by the Gulf war, India is critically short of foreign exchange. It borrowed \$1.79 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in January. Bankers and diplomats say it wants another \$2 billion. Political instability will deter the IMF.

Senior politician Jaipal Reddy, asked whether his anti-Congress Janata Dal Party would help to ensure the interim budget was passed, said: "It will go through Monday. We don't want to create a constitutional crisis."

But Reddy made plain that Venkataraman had failed to silence allegations that he has been giving Gandhi time to try to stage off polls which his Congress Party is unlikely to win.

The allegations are important in India, which prides itself on maintaining parliamentary democracy in a multi-ethnic country of 850 million people. Venkataraman has described himself as "a copy-book president," aloof from party intrigue.

All parties except Congress have formally demanded that the president dissolve the Lok Sabha and call polls as soon as the interim budget and other essential legislation is approved.

"There is distrust," Reddy said in a telephone interview. "(The president's) stubborn reluctance to indicate in so many words that he will dissolve parliament arouses our suspicion."

Congress lost its long hold on power in an inconclusive 1989 general election.

Politicians said early polls could be held at the end of May.

But anti-Congress politicians said Saturday that they feared Gandhi might now be trying to revive the long-since dissolved alliance with Shekhar which collapsed in acrimony earlier this week.

Gandhi, with 197 Lok Sabha supporters, had dropped Shekhar's tiny Janata Dal (Socialist) Party in power since November.

There are 54 Janata Dal (S) supporters out of 515 Lok Sabha members, according to the latest official count.

Shekhar quit after Congress walked out of the Lok Sabha, alleging that Janata Dal (S) had sent two policemen to spy on Gandhi's residence.

Western diplomats, critical both of Gandhi's conduct and of anti-Congress pressure on the president, were loath to predict the outcome of the crisis but said they hoped Venkataraman would call polls once essential votes were passed.

"He's been pretty scrupulous so far," said one diplomatic source, adding that Venkataraman's advice to Shekhar was probably as far as he could go to reassure the opposition.

"This seems to be some sort of face-saving device against the rather improper suggestions of the opposition," the source said. "He can't be seen to be bowing to this sort of pressure."

Meanwhile Gandhi said he asked the nation's president Saturday to call new elections in the wake of Shekhar's resignation.

Gandhi's announcement put to rest fears that his Congress Party would try to build a majority in parliament by wooing defectors.

Tutu hospitalised

CAPE TOWN (R) — Desmond Tutu, the Anglican Archbishop of Southern Africa and 1984 Nobel Peace Prize winner, has been admitted to hospital with a urinary tract infection. John Allen, spokesman for the 59-year-old cleric, said Saturday Tutu became ill while visiting Namibia, which is part of his diocese. Tutu was flown home to Cape Town and admitted to hospital Friday. Allen said doctors had prescribed a period of complete rest without visitors other than Tutu's immediate family.

Bush honours Thatcher

WASHINGTON (AP) — President George Bush has bestowed America's highest civilian honour on former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, calling her "one of the greatest leaders of our time."

"This heroic woman made history move her way," Bush said before presenting her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Bush recalled telephoning the prime minister to tell her that one ship would be allowed to proceed to Oman, without being stopped, through the allied blockade against Iraq. "She listened to my explanation, agreed with the decision, but then added these words of caution, words that guided me through the Gulf crisis, words I'll never forget as long as I'm alive," Bush told the White House audience of 150.

"Remember, George," she said, "this is no time to go wobbly," said the president, as the room broke into laughter. "Never, ever will it be said that Margaret Thatcher went wobbly."

Nearly all Sri Lankan women harassed at work

COLOMBO (R) — Nearly all Sri Lankan women are sexually harassed at work, according to a trade union study published on International Women's Day. The study, carried out by the Conference of Public Service Independent Trade Unions among 100 working women between the ages of 20 and 39, found that sexual harassment was greater in the private sector than in the public sector. All the women working in the private sector and 97 per cent in the public sector complained of sexual harassment. "The majority of women in both sectors were subject to remarks, jokes and abuse on their appearance and mode of dress," the study said. Women felt helpless and humiliated when faced with sexual harassment, resulting in greater stress, tension and mental illness, it said. The study said most women would rather face this situation than risk losing their jobs by complaining. The Sri Lankan workforce is 56.6 per cent female.

Police attacked with frozen kangaroo tails

SYDNEY (R) — Australian police patrolling an outback highway were attacked by a group of aborigines wielding frozen kangaroo tails. The two officers were set upon by about 15 aborigines with meter long frozen kangaroo tails when they tried to remove an aborigine who was sitting in the middle of the Stuart Highway trying to commit suicide, a police sergeant said. "It sounds humorous, but it was quite frightening. The officers suffered bruises and cuts, but nothing serious," Sergeant Phil Clapin said by telephone from Alice Springs. Clapin said the attack occurred near the small outback town of Tea Tree, about 200 kilometres north of Alice Springs. He said frozen kangaroo tails were shipped into the outback from Adelaide primarily for aboriginal consumption. "It saves them going out and killing the kangaroos themselves," he said.

All-women tribe sought in Irian Jaya

JAKARTA (R) — The Indonesian government is sending an expedition into the remote jungles of Irian Jaya to look for a rumoured Amazon-like tribe. The Antara News Agency said. A local official told the agency the 17-member team would start off next week into the hinterland near Volita Lake, or the Lake of Women. The women are said to kidnap members of the opposite sex from neighbouring tribes to father their children. Once they have served their purpose, the men as well as any male progeny are killed. The expedition team will take along instant noodles, salt, sweets and cigarettes as gifts. The official did not say how many of its members would be men.

Thai junta frees former premier

BANGKOK (R) — Former Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Chonnavan and his deputy premier were released from military custody Saturday, two weeks after the elected government was overthrown in a military coup.

Chatichai told reporters he was giving up politics and might retire to Switzerland. But the man whose political motto used to be "no problem" still faces a corruption investigation.

Chatichai left for home from the air force headquarters where he had been detained. Earlier, he had breakfast with coup leader General Sunthorn Kongsompong and Anand Panyacharun, who was installed by the military junta as caretaker premier last week.

"I'm going home to rest. As for my future, I am giving up my political career and washing my hands of politics," Chatichai said.

Ex-Deputy Prime Minister Arthit Kamlang-Ek was released a few hours later.

It was Chatichai's appointment of Arthit, a one-time army com-

mander and rival of the present high command, to the post of deputy defence minister that gave the generals the final push to launch their Feb. 23 coup after months of tension.

As troops seized government buildings in the capital, Chatichai and Arthit were taken at gunpoint from the plane that was to have flown them north to Chiang Mai where Arthit was to have been sworn in by the king.

The military high command said it was fed up with the rampant corruption of officials and politicians.

The junta imposed martial law and has pledged to restore democratic rule by the end of the year and has installed a cabinet largely made up of civilian technocrats.

Chatichai, flanked by Anand and Sunthorn when he spoke at air force headquarters, praised the new government as good and capable.

"I tried to sort out the country's problems through democratic means. Maybe this government can sort it another way," he said.

Smiling and looking in good health, he said he had gone jogging every day and was treated well.

He said he had quit the leadership of his Chat Thai Party. Chatichai said he had no definite plans yet but might go to Switzerland, where he had a home.

Chatichai heads a list of about 25 ex-ministers and officials under investigation for corruption. The military junta has ordered his assets frozen while a special corruption committee probes whether any were unlawfully gained.

Chatichai, known for his fondness for good cigars, Scotch whisky and the nightlife, amassed a fortune before he became premier through business interests.

Several Western governments and the Amnesty International human rights organisation had demanded the release of Chatichai, who became Thailand's first democratically elected premier in more than a decade when he assumed power in 1988.

Fighting breaks out on eve of Salvador elections

SAN SALVADOR (AP) — Leftist rebels attacked the National Police Academy and government forces battled guerrillas in the countryside on the eve of weekend elections.

The New York-based human rights group Americas Watch issued a report noting the participation of "an impressively broad range of political parties" in the legislative and municipal races scheduled for Sunday.

But it expressed worry about pre-election violence that has included the murder of at least three candidates or activists and the destruction by arson of the only major newspaper that regularly included the leftist rebel perspective in El Salvador's 11-year civil war.

Americas Watch said there has been more violence in this campaign than in the 1989 presidential election.

Early Friday, insurgents peacefully occupied six eastern towns and held meetings to explain their position regarding Sunday's balloting.

They have said they do not consider the elections legitimate but will respect voting and hold a truce to allow citizens unobstructed passage to polling places.

According to the clandestine rebel radio, guerrillas distributed leaflets inscribed with the legend "a vote for Arena is a vote for more hunger and more war."

Arena is the commonly used name of the Republican Nationalist Alliance, the governing rightist party of President Alfredo Cristiani. The party hopes to retain the independent majority it enjoys.

In addition to electing 84 lawmakers, the 2.15 million-strong electorate will choose mayors and town councils for 262 municipalities.

7 killed in S. Africa township battle

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Seven people were killed — one burned to death with a flaming car tyre "necklace" — in fighting between rival black groups in Johannesburg's Alexandra township Saturday, police said.

Police and military reinforcements were sent to the rundown township adjoining Johannesburg's elite white northern suburbs to keep heavily-armed factions apart.

The battle was the latest in more than three years of bloody rivalry between supporters of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and Zulu chief Mangosuthu Buthe's Inkatha Freedom Party, in which about 3,500 people have died.

Police spokesman Johan Mostert said the mood in Alexandra was "explosive" at midday, as officers tried to persuade ANC and Inkatha mobs to surrender their arms and disperse. Police said the fighting erupted about 5 a.m.

Mostert rejected ANC allegations that police initially sided with Inkatha, a charge regularly levelled at the security forces which they routinely deny.

Another police officer said earlier Saturday that one of the dead was killed by a "necklace" — a petrol-soaked car tyre placed around a victim's shoulders and set alight.

The necklace was a trademark of radical attacks against blacks regarded as government stooges during an anti-government uprising between 1986 and 1989.

Residents in Alexandra said sporadic shooting continued throughout the morning. Police revised their initial report of four dead, saying seven had been killed and at least 28 wounded.

Reporters said that in one incident a man fired an automatic weapon at police and journalists.

In Natal province, police were stoochy Saturday at the coastal village of Port Shepstone, where 22 people have been killed in fighting between the same groups this month.

Police said a six-year-old child and an elderly man were hacked to death near Port Shepstone Friday with long cane knives known as pangas.

Serbian police clash with Belgrade protesters

BELGRADE — Serbian police fired tear gas and used water cannon as thousands of anti-Communist demonstrators occupied Belgrade's central square Saturday.

The demonstrators were protesting against the policy of Belgrade Television, which they accused of being a tool of the republic's ruling Communist Party.

About 5,000 demonstrators defied the tear gas, water cannon and baton-wielding police to break through a cordon and occupy the city's Republic Square.

Communists retained power in free elections in Serbia in December and have since maintained an iron grip on its media, especially Belgrade Television.

The protest, the first show of strength since the elections, was organised by opposition parties to demand the sacking of top television bosses.

Police fought fiercely with the demonstrators, who waved Serbian flags and yelled, "thieves, thieves." Some protesters charged at vehicles carrying the water cannon and armoured personnel carriers.

At one point, a demonstrator climbed on top of one of the vehicles and waved a Serbian flag.

Police responded with a bar-

rage of tear gas but failed to move the demonstrators out of the square, which lies between the National Museum and National Theatre.

Police had earlier sealed off most of the city and banned all the traffic from the area around the square. Groups of policemen, heavily armed and wearing helmets, checked and searched anyone approaching the city centre.

It was Belgrade's first such confrontation since student riots in 1968.

Tanjung news agency said police later withdrew from the square and a number of people were seen lying on the ground. There was no immediate news of injuries or casualties.

Journalists at the scene said that after the police retreat, the crowd in the square swelled to about 30,000 people.

In a separate development, the Serbian Republic cut all funding for Albanian-language schools in the restive southern province of Kosovo in a dispute with rebellious teachers, reports said Friday.

Funds are being withheld from the high schools that instruct about 72,000 ethnic Albanian students, where teachers have resisted a new official curriculum, said a Serbian government dispatch in the Politika daily.

20 killed as Colombian rebel attacks intensify

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Colombian rebels have stepped up a two-month-old offensive, leaving seven police officers and 13 guerrillas dead in fresh clashes nationwide, the Defence Ministry said.

Five battles were reported in the past 24 hours between government forces and Colombia's two remaining rebel groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN).

The groups declared all-out war on the state after the army bombed and captured a rebel jungle command post in early December.

On Friday, guerrilla commanders reiterated their willingness to begin ceasefire talks.

In a radio-telephone interview with the Associated Press and the

Women mark international day by noting U.N. sexism

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Women at the United Nations marked International Women's Day by complaining about institutional sexism in the 159-nation body. Since 1945, only two women have headed top U.N. agencies. They are both serving now.

"It's been recognised in the secretariat that not enough has been done to promote women," U.N. spokesman Francois Giuliani said.

In London, Amnesty International used the day to draw attention to the "barbaric" treatment of women prisoners in more than 40 nations.

The human rights group said jailers often rape women prisoners, knowing that the social stigma is so great that their victims will never publicly accuse their tormentors.

Amnesty International cited the house arrest of Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, restricted since 1989, and the death of South African black lawyer Victoria Mxenge. She was shot in 1985, and there were claims of government complicity.

Among the other nations singled out for criticism were Morocco, Peru, India, Pakistan, El Salvador, Syria, Chad, Mauritania, Guatemala, the Philippines, Turkey, Colombia, Sri Lanka, China, Chile, Ethiopia and Iran.

The Soviet Union observed the day with marching bands, flowers and folk dancers, but some women watching the festivities in Moscow said they had nothing to celebrate, complaining of low pay, poor living standards, and the scarcity of consumer goods, like cosmetics.

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar dedicated his message on Women's Day to refugee women. While women everywhere strive for equality, he said, "none have had to do so under more adverse circumstances than those who have been forced to become refugees."

Women constitute about three-fourths of the 15 million refugees who are under the care of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata. She is one of the two women heading major U.N. agencies.

Dr. Nafis Sadik, the other, runs the U.N. Population Fund. She drew attention to the role women play in development activities, saying they are often the "key to success or failure of development."

Ruling elites often see women only as child bearers, Dr. Sadik said, so they don't allocate funds for projects that would help women, such as family planning, employment and health care.

Government fail to realise that women are managers of the "informal economy," contributing to health care, education, family

Women mark international day by noting U.N. sexism

budget management, and too often are the only bread-winner in the household.

Employees and visitors arriving at U.N. headquarters Friday were greeted by female staffers passing out handbills saying that "International Women's Day this year cannot be considered a cause for celebration in the United Nations."

Their handbill said "the other 364 days are testimony to the organisation's persistent violation of Article 8 of its own charter, which commands that the organisation place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality."

The handbills were distributed by the Group on Equal Rights For Women in the United Nations, a private organisation recognised by the United Nations with offices in U.N. headquarters.

The United Nations has been struggling for years to reach its own goals for hiring and promotion. Senior appointments in the world body are distributed geographically, with governments recommending appointees.

Governments usually nominate well-known former ambassadors, cabinet members or officials ousted in a political turnover whom they want to keep busy far away from the capital. These are usually men, reflecting the male

U.N. report says Burmese government refusing to quit

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — A confidential U.N. human rights report criticises Burma's military junta for failing to turn over power to democratically elected civilian officials and for detaining opposition members.

The report, by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, notes that she was not allowed to inspect Burma's prisons, so "numerous allegations of torture and other degrading treatment" of detainees could not be investigated.

The unusually strong report led the 43-nation U.N. Human Rights Commission to vote unanimously at a secret session Feb. 26 in Geneva to condemn Burma's government. The commission's annual meeting ended Friday.

Burma's military government, headed by Gen. Saw Maung, has not replied to any of the allegations in the report. The commission voted in secret, a common practice in similar circumstances, so as not to jeopardise future visits by its investigator.

Commissioner Sadako Ogata, then a professor, visited Burma in early November. A copy of her confidential report, obtained Friday by the Associated Press, shows that she found a repressive, closed society, with citizens living in fear.

Burma's government did not let Mrs. Ogata meet with U Tin Oo, the imprisoned chairman of the National League for Democracy (NLD), which won the May 1990 national election, or with the NLD's general secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest since 1989.

Her requests to visit prisons and other detention centres were refused, and she appealed with authorities to allow visits by the Red Cross and other groups.

The National League for Democracy won 80 per cent of the seats in parliament in the 1990 election, but Mrs. Ogata "could not detect any preparation" on the part of the military to hand over power to the elected civilian government.

U.N. report says Burmese government refusing to quit

dominance of politics in most countries.

"The United Nations can only do so much if it doesn't help it," Dr. Sadik has said.

Only four of the 159 U.N. member-states have women as ambassadors — Liechtenstein, Senegal, Singapore, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Of the 42 undersecretaries-general in the U.N. system, only two are women — Therese P. Sevigny, the head of the Dept. of Public Information, and Margaret J. Anstee, head of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, based in Vienna. She coordinates the U.N.'s anti-drug activities.

No assistant-secretaries-general are women, though there were four women in 1985.

In the 1980s, the General Assembly asked the U.N. Secretariat to achieve 30 per cent female staffing at the professional level by 1990.

But the world body fell short, filling 28.9 per cent of the approximately 2,500 professional posts with women, and men still vastly outnumber women among the new appointments.

The Group on Equal Rights for Women in the United Nations said that in the last three years, 122 men were recruited at the upper professional levels, as opposed to only 19 women.